# MURIEL AND HER AUNT LU

## A TALE OF PARIS

BY MAY BALDWIN

foreign

Followed by the admiring glances of the market-women, who murmured *'La belle Anglaise'* as she passed.

# Muriel and her Aunt Lu

or

## School and Art Life in Paris

By

MAY BALDWIN

Author of
'Holly House and Ridge's Row,' 'Golden Square High School,'
'Mysie,' 'Peg's Adventures in Paris,' &c.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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TO

MY FRIEND

ROSE MACKINTOSH

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# CONTENTS.


| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | A TELEGRAM | 1 |
| II. | MOTHERLESS | 13 |
| III. | L'ANGE DE L'ATELIER | 27 |
| IV. | A RUNAWAY | 40 |
| V. | AN UNEXPECTED VISIT | 52 |
| VI. | MURIEL'S FIRST DAY IN PARIS | 66 |
| VII. | 'LES MESDAMES' TO THE RESCUE | 80 |
| VIII. | SUBJECTS TO BE AVOIDED | 92 |
| IX. | DOMESTIC ECONOMY | 107 |
| X. | THE PHANTOM WEEPING-WILLOW | 122 |
| XI. | IN THE HAUNTS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ | 136 |
| XII. | THE TALE OF 'TOINETTE | 148 |
| XIII. | A SPOILT GIRL | 158 |
| XIV. | THE 'GRANDES EAUX' | 170 |
| XV. | MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS | 184 |
| XVI. | KING ARTHUR OF THE ROUND TABLE A FRENCHMAN! | 196 |
| XVII. | A SCHOOL PROMENADE | 208 |
| XVIII. | THE QUARREL | 225 |
| XIX. | THE RECONCILIATION | 238 |
| XX. | MADEMOISELLE DE SÉGUR | 252 |
| XXI. | THE STUDENTS' TRICK | 262 |
| XXII. | LA MALMAISON | 273 |
| XXIII. | TURNING THE TABLES | 286 |
| XXIV. | A FAMILY EXCURSION | 299 |
| XXV. | DUTY VERSUS PLEASURE | 311 |
| XXVI. | PARIS OLD AND NEW | 325 |
| XXVII. | THE REWARD OF SELF-DENIAL | 338 |
| XXVIII. | THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY | 352 |
| XXIX. | AN ENGLISH PICNIC | 365 |
| XXX. | FAMOUS INK-SPOTS AND OTHER THINGS | 379 |
| XXXI. | THE WIND-UP OF THE SCHOOL | 395 |
| XXXII. | A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT | 404 |

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.


PAGE

Followed by the admiring glances of the market-women, who murmured '*La belle Anglaise*' as she passed..*Frontispiece.*

He gave a wave of his hand, as much as to say, 'You may tear it up' . . . . . 32

'Your mother was right, *petite*, and I will tear up the sketches—*voilà!*' . . . . . 106

Surrounded by a cluster of little children, who were watching her movements with great interest . . . . . 133

It was not easy in the half-light to say who or what they were . . . . . 222

'Eh, monsieur, what have I not told you?' inquired the good-natured guide . . . . . 281

Marthe looked like a naughty little girl holding her father's hand . . . . . 310

Muriel went down quite willingly to receive her two crowns of laurel and white roses . . . . . 402

# MURIEL AND HER AUNT LU.

## CHAPTER I.

### A TELEGRAM.

'COMMENT! seven flights of stairs to climb with this telegram? It is to be hoped that it means good news, and that the young lady will give me a good *pourboire* to recompense me for my journey.'

'As for that, one does not have good news when one is poor, and one does not live near the sky if one is *not* poor,' replied the *concierge* to the bearer of the telegraph-message, who stood with one foot on the first step of the stairs of the house in the Latin Quarter in Paris, on the seventh floor of which lived the person to whom was addressed his message, presumably urgent, since it was a telegram; and if one does not have good news (according to the *concierge*) if one is poor, neither does one have telegrams unless they are important. But still the easy-going employé of the Government stood and chattered with the vivacity of a Parisian to the *concierge*, who sat in his room, a pair of boots which he was mending in his hands, for, like many *concierges* in the less wealthy

quarters of Paris, he combined the trade of cobbler with that of house-porter.

How long the two might have stayed chatting together, while the young lady to whom the telegram was addressed remained in ignorance of the news which was to have such an influence in shaping her life, will never be known; for at that minute light steps were heard descending the stairs, and the *concierge*, looking through the glass spyhole which commanded the staircase, exclaimed, '*Voilà!* there is the young English lady! You have good chance; you need not mount the seven stages of which you were so much afraid.'

'What is it, monsieur? A letter for me?' said a girl of about twenty in a pleasant voice and very good French.

'No, mademoiselle, a telegram which has just this minute come, and which I have told monsieur is for the highest story to which he can go,' said the *concierge*.

'Thank you,' replied the girl, looking surprised at receiving a telegram, for it could only be from England, and she had only yesterday had a letter from home, whence they wrote regularly every week ever since she had been in Paris, which was nearly a year. But as she read it her face changed, a cry broke from her, she gave one glance at the clock, gasped out to the astonished *concierge*, 'I must go to England!' and, running down the steep street, jumped into a taximeter, which immediately drove off at a great pace.

The two men looked at one another in consternation.

'What! is she gone away to England with no luggage, like that, in a minute? And without telling her family about it?' cried the telegraph-messenger, scandalised.

'So it seems; but as for asking her family, it is to be presumed that it is her family who have summoned her, for she has no family here,' replied the *concierge*. 'And as for going like that, the English think no more of crossing their dreadful Channel than you and I do of taking a trip to the Bois.' He meant, of course, the Bois of Boulogne, the Paris Hyde Park.

The other shrugged his shoulders. 'Even that promenade would take me a little more time to prepare for than she has spent on her arrangements; but a young woman who lives alone'—— He shrugged his shoulders.

'The young English lady does *not* live alone, if you are talking of her. She lives under my care, in a modest little apartment in my house,' broke in the wife of the *concierge*, who had been busy in the back premises, and had only heard the latter part of the conversation, but now came bustling forward and asked her husband what was the matter, and why mademoiselle had gone off in such a hurry.

Her husband shrugged his shoulders. 'She had a *dépêche* with bad news which obliged her instant departure,' he remarked, taking up his boot,

which in his surprise he had laid down, and commencing to sew it again.

'Bad news! What bad news?'

Her husband again shrugged his shoulders. 'How should I know? She only said, "I must go to England"—*pouf!*—and off she went like the wind. As she looked distressed, I presume it was bad news.'

His wife glanced at the clock. 'Ten o'clock. She will have gone to catch the ten-twenty at the Gare St Lazare. That is the time she went at Christmas; but she will never do it, the poor young lady! Why did you not ask her what was the matter? She has not parents, so it cannot be that they are ill,' soliloquised the woman. 'No, it cannot be her parents; it must be the brother whose photo she has in her room with his wife and little girl, or it may be the pretty little girl—she is very fond of the little girl. I hope it is not that they are dead.'

Her husband waved his boot at her. 'If that is not like a woman, to settle it all in her mind before she knows anything! I dare say it is only some business that has called her away in such a hurry.'

By this time the telegraph-messenger had gone, and the husband and wife were left to discuss at their leisure the subject of their young tenant's abrupt departure—which, however, they soon ceased to do, seeing there was nothing to be known about it.

'We must wait until to-morrow. Miss Taylor has much consideration for me, and she will no doubt

write as soon as she arrives to-night, and we shall hear to-morrow,' said the wife of the *concierge* as she sat down to prepare the vegetables for the midday meal, and dismissed the subject of the English girl and her probable trouble from her mind for the present.

In the meanwhile the subject of all these conjectures was driving through the streets of Paris—as the wife of the *concierge* had guessed—in the direction of the station of St Lazare as fast as she could induce the cabman to drive her, in order to catch the morning boat-train for England. Her face was white and her lips pressed close together, and in her hands she clasped the telegram which had caused all the trouble.

It was very short: 'Muriel dangerously ill. Come.'

And so she came, without, as has been seen, the delay of a moment, which would have meant the delay of twelve hours, if, that is to say, she caught the day-train, which she had only twenty minutes to do.

Just for the moment, the anxiety of watching every clock—not two of which were alike, as is the aggravating way of clocks in Paris—occupied her mind and prevented the young Englishwoman from thinking of the other and greater anxiety. It was just two minutes to the twenty past ten when the cab drove up to the main entrance of the station; and Miss Taylor, having noted that the taxi marked one franc fifty, threw a two-france piece to the driver,

and with an exclamation of despair ran into the station.

'Tickets are not given out after five minutes before the train starts,' so the notice said at the station; but Miss Taylor decided to take her chance, and, thrusting her fifty-franc (two-pound) paper note through the ticket-office window, said 'London single, quick!' and was given her ticket by the employé, who, casting a swift glance at the anxious white face of the girl, guessed that she was pressed for time. 'Mount quick, madame,' he observed; but before the words were out of his mouth the girl was flying up the stairs, and, running through the passage leading to the departure-platform before the astonished officials could take her ticket or stop her, jumped into the train, which was slowly moving out of the station.

Whether doubts as to her sanity excited them, or whether they thought she was a criminal flying from justice, is not certain; but some doubts they must have had, for they actually stopped the train, and several excited railway officials came up to demand what she meant by rushing on to the platform without having her ticket examined, or anything, and where was her luggage.

'I have none. I have been summoned to — to a seriously ill relative,' she stammered, and she showed the telegram.

Fortunately the foremost man could read English, and he read first the telegram and then looked at the

time it was received. 'Quick work!' he muttered as he observed that the message had only reached Paris half-an-hour ago; and, taking off his hat, he said in a tone of polite sympathy, '*Bon voyage*,' and '*Bonnes nouvelles, madame*,' and withdrew, to give the signal that the train might proceed.

As may be imagined, the occurrence excited much interest, and Miss Taylor was the object of much sympathy and kindness on the journey; of which, however, she was scarcely aware, so engrossed was she with her thoughts, until a little girl in the compartment shyly handed her some fruit, when, to the consternation of her fellow-travellers, she burst into tears.

'I beg your pardon,' she said to the mother of the child after a minute, calming herself; 'but it is to the sickbed of a young niece not very unlike your little girl that I am hurrying.'

'What is the matter with her?' inquired the lady. 'Perhaps it is not very serious. Children's ailments often appear very serious, and yet the patients recover; the young have such powers of recuperation.'

'I do not know. My brother only says this;' and she handed the telegram to the lady.

'Muriel is the name of your niece?' inquired the lady. 'It is a pretty name.'

'Yes; she was named after her mother,' replied Miss Taylor, and then she started. Muriel was also the name of her sister-in-law; and, although she hated

herself for the thought, she found herself being a little consoled, not hoping that it was her sister-in-law, of whom she was fond in a way, but relieved at the thought that perhaps it was not Muriel, her only niece, whom she idolised, whereas her brother's wife —well, they got on, and here she checked herself. Muriel, the elder Muriel, was a very nice woman, a good wife and an excellent mother, and Miss Taylor sighed as she felt that, either way, it was a very miserable home-coming.

'It may be my sister-in-law,' she observed. 'I never thought of that.'

The lady looked at the telegram again. 'I think that is most likely,' she observed. 'This telegram is from your brother, and Muriel to him will mean his wife. If he had meant his child he would have said "little Muriel." Do you not think so?'

'Yes,' agreed Miss Taylor. 'I am afraid I thought of my niece first, because she is almost always in my mind. She writes to me weekly, and is such a dear child.'

'How old is she?' inquired the little girl in the carriage.

'Fourteen; but to hear her talk you would think she was twenty, she is so old-fashioned. You see, she is the only child; and, my sister-in-law being rather delicate, she has been made old—too old for her age.'

'All you tell me makes me more certain that it is the mother who is ill, and no doubt your poor

brother has sent for you in his trouble,' the lady remarked.

'Yes, he is devoted to his wife, poor Vincent!' said his sister; but her companions saw that, in spite of her sorrow for her brother's trouble, it was no longer the grief that it had been. Then, as if to excuse herself a little, she took a letter from her pocket, and saying, 'I had just been reading this for the third or fourth time,' she handed to her sympathetic companion a letter written on thin paper in a schoolgirl's hand:

'DEAREST AUNT LU,—That was interesting, what you told me about Montmartre, and how it took its name from those martyrs. I think if I am ever a painter I shall paint legends like that of St Dionysius walking up the hill with his head in his hands, and the angels surrounding him singing hymns; but mamma thinks your windmills the kind of subject she prefers. She calls mine gruesome, so I said I would paint St Ignatius Loyola taking his vows with his nine companions in the Chapelle des Martyrs at Montmartre. Mamma did not know that he had ever been to Paris. Everybody seems to have been there. Do write often, please, as your letters amuse mamma, who is not well. I like the tale about the wife of Molière lighting a huge fire on his grave in the old cemetery at Montmartre to warm the poor in winter. All your letters are full of pictures! I wish I could write like that, and I wish I could come

to Paris; I seem almost to know it from your letters and mamma's descriptions. Did you watch the sunset last night from your balcony, and did you think of me, and wish I was with you when you looked at it? I must stop, as mamma is not well and I have to go and sit by her. So good-bye from your loving niece, MURIEL TAYLOR.'

'I see she says here that her mother is ill,' observed the lady as she handed back the letter, with some kindly remarks upon it.

Miss Taylor looked shocked. 'I never noticed that. The fact is, my sister-in-law is so often ailing that I do not attach much importance to her being "not well," as my niece Muriel says. Oh dear! I do hope it is not very serious; but she has been ill before and recovered, so I do not feel so anxious about her. Still, I will send off a telegram at Dieppe asking that news may be sent to me at Newhaven.'

'Yes, that would be a wise move if you have time,' agreed the other.

'I shall give it to some English sailor or any one I see. People are so kind when one is in trouble,' said Miss Taylor, who had evidently had the good fortune to meet with kind people.

She took a pencil and sheet of paper out of her pocket-book, but she hesitated before she wrote the message. Somehow, she did not like to ask which Muriel it was. Still, she felt as if she must know how the invalid, whichever it might be, was;

so she put 'Wire news to Newhaven,' and waited with what patience she could until she arrived at Newhaven.

'You are an artist, then?' inquired her companion.

'Yes, and have come to Paris to study art under Monsieur Goupil,' she replied, mentioning a famous painter. 'And Muriel takes a great interest in my work; and though, of course, she cannot draw in the true sense of the word, she has the artist's instinct and a positive passion for pictures and for art. It is a pleasure to take her to picture-galleries; she takes such an intelligent interest in the pictures and what you tell her about them, and even makes very shrewd remarks about them. But you will think I am a fond and foolish aunt,' she added, breaking off in her enthusiastic description of her niece's abilities.

But the other urged her to go on. She saw that it helped to while away the time, and she drew the young artist out, while her little daughter listened with eager attention to the account of the unknown girl's precocity.

'I will try and like picture-galleries too!' she said suddenly, and the two elders smiled at her gravity.

In course of time they were nearing Newhaven; and while the other passengers were struggling with the Customs Miss Taylor, who had no luggage to have examined, was able to go and inquire about her telegram, which had been received and answered: 'Wife still living. Wants to see you.' Tears rose to Miss Taylor's eyes; and as she travelled up to town

she was only thinking of her sister-in-law, who was evidently very, very ill.

It was eight o'clock when she reached her brother's house in the west of London, and saw her niece Muriel's grave, tear-stained face at the window. In a moment the girl had rushed to the front door and opened it, saying as she threw herself into her young aunt's arms, 'Oh auntie, auntie, she is so ill, and they won't let me go near her!'

Miss Taylor clasped her niece in her arms for one moment, and then said, 'Hush, Muriel dear! Let me go. I want to see how mother is, and when I have seen her I will come down and tell you, and ask that you may come up for a moment.'

## CHAPTER II.

### MOTHERLESS.

AS Miss Taylor was hurrying out of the room she met her brother, who came forward quickly with a look of relief upon his grave, careworn face, saying, 'How quick you have been! We—I hardly dared to expect you to-day. We did not think you could catch the train this morning, for my telegram only left to-day. But come at once; she heard your voice and is asking for you.'

In the anxiety of the moment neither the brother nor sister thought of rest or food, and the two went gently into poor Mrs Taylor's room. When she saw her sister-in-law, so great was the change that the girl could hardly suppress an exclamation as she bent over the sick woman and gently kissed her.

The face of the invalid brightened a little as she said faintly, 'Lu, I—am—so—glad! I have—wanted to—see you! I could not die easy until you promised'——

Then the voice ceased, and her sister-in-law, thinking that she would never speak again, remembered the poor girl downstairs, and, turning to her brother, said, 'I think Muriel should be allowed to come to her mother.'

'You are right,' said her brother, and he nodded to the nurse, who went to fetch the girl.

Muriel came in on tiptoe and kissed her mother, who immediately opened her eyes and said to Miss Taylor, 'Promise to take care of her, if necessary.'

'I promise, dear. I will do whatever you wish, if you are not spared to take care of her yourself,' said Miss Taylor very low but distinctly, and she was glad to see that she was understood, for the mother gave a sigh of relief.

Half-an-hour later Muriel was motherless and Vincent Taylor a widower.

How thankful Louise Taylor was that she had happened to come down at that moment dressed; also, that it happened—or rather as Providence ordained it—she had a French bank-note to the value of two pounds in her pocket, so that she could rush off to the station without the delay of an instant, and thus catch the train for England.

It was the more providential, because bank-notes were not too common with the young artist, and that particular bank-note was the payment for a picture that had just been sold.

Poor Muriel would have been very lonely if her aunt had not been there, for Mr Taylor shut himself up in his study and gave himself up to his grief, seeming to forget his daughter, and everything else for the matter of that. Miss Taylor had some difficulty in arousing him to attend to all the sad but necessary arrangements, and finally settled as much

as she could herself without appealing to the poor man, who was worn-out with many long night-watches and grief; and it was Muriel who seemed to know most about everything.

At last the funeral was over, and it became necessary to speak about the future of Muriel. Mr Taylor was a young man still, having married at twenty-one, and now at thirty-six was still a struggling doctor.

Before she spoke to him, Louise Taylor had quite made up her mind that if he wished it she would give up her work in Paris, much though it would cost her to abandon her artistic studies, and come and keep house for her brother and her motherless niece.

'Vincent,' she said at last, the evening after the funeral, 'I am so sorry to bother you, but I want to know what you would like me to do.'

Her brother looked up in a bewildered way and replied, 'To do? You! Why, you will go on, of course, with your painting, won't you?'

'But Muriel? You will want some one to look after her here. You cannot'—— Here his sister paused; it is always so hard to put into words the fact that one is alone. It brings home the loss afresh.

But Mr Taylor replied quickly, 'I shall not stay here. I could not bear it without her. I shall go away as soon as things can be arranged.'

'Go away!' echoed his sister in surprise, for though the practice did not bring in a large income, still it

was a living, and her brother had very small private means. 'Where are you going?'

'To travel. I have been offered a berth as surgeon on a ship, and it will pay for Muriel's keep at a good school,' was his answer.

Louise Taylor felt very justly hurt and rather indignant at what she considered was her brother's selfish conduct, and at his settling all this without consulting her, and said, 'You might have told me before it was all settled, especially as her mother wished'——

But poor Mr Taylor could not bear his wife to be mentioned, and his sister was sorry she had said so much, as he replied quickly, 'I have done what I think she would wish. Of course, if you were not so busy studying in Paris I should have liked nothing better than to leave the child under your care; and as it is, I hope you will spend the holidays with her, as you have always done with us. I will arrange that.'

'Have you chosen the school?' inquired Miss Taylor.

'Oh no, of course not. I thought we should do that together. Will you try to find a good school for her?' Then he added as an afterthought, 'If you thought it possible to have her with you'——

But Miss Taylor interrupted him hastily. 'It is not possible,' she said. 'As you know, I live in a tiny flat at the top of a house in the Latin Quarter in Paris, and I could not look after Muriel, for I am out

at the studio a great part of the day, besides sketching in the picture-galleries and elsewhere. She would be left too much alone, even if it were the right life for her.'

'I thought so; that is why I did not suggest it, at all events for the present. She must go to a good school for a year at least; and indeed I think it will be good for her; she has been too much with grown-up people, and has ideas beyond her years. She is a good and clever girl, but terribly self-willed.'

'She will feel it terribly. Have you spoken to her about it?' replied Miss Taylor.

'Oh no, not yet; in fact, I thought it would come better from you. The child seems devoted to you, and I am glad of it,' observed Mr Taylor.

Miss Taylor privately thought it was the father's business to tell his child how her future was to be arranged; however, she saw that he shrank from the task, and agreed to take it upon herself. But she was not prepared for the storm of tears that the news called forth.

'I am to go to a boarding-school, all alone, away from you and father?' cried the girl. 'I can't! I should be miserable! I don't like girls—you know I don't—and I have never been used to them.'

'Then you can't tell whether you will like them or not,' objected her aunt.

'Yes, I can, because I have seen lots of girls, and I never had anything to say to them when they came here or I went to see them.'

It should be explained that Muriel had never been to school. At first her mother taught her, and then she had a governess, who also helped Mrs Taylor in her housekeeping, as she was too delicate to do what was necessary herself; but six months ago the governess had left, and since then Muriel had done what lessons she could with her mother when the latter felt equal to it, which was not very often if the truth be known, and the girl had spent most of her time waiting on her mother, and teaching herself by miscellaneous reading.

'Well, dear, father wishes you to go to school, and that ends the matter,' declared Miss Taylor at last, to close the argument, which was as painful to her as it was to her niece.

But Muriel was not to be managed so easily. 'Oh no, that does not end it at all. I shall speak to father; he has always consulted me before, and I am sure he will now,' she announced.

'You are not going to trouble father just now when he is so sad and troubled already?' inquired her aunt reproachfully.

Muriel's lip trembled, and she paused before she said, 'It is a matter of so much importance, and I always help to settle such things.'

Miss Taylor thought it was indeed time that Muriel went to school when she heard this, which showed how much the girl had been brought out of her right place, and she said, 'It is a matter of too much importance for you to settle, Muriel, and you must

allow your father and me to be the judges as to what is best for you now.'

'Do you think it best?' inquired Muriel in surprise.

'Of course I do. What else could you do? You cannot go with father on the voyage, and you cannot come with me.'

'Why not?' asked the girl quickly. 'Why cannot I come to live with you? I would keep house for you, and wait upon you, just as I did upon mother; and—and—you know she asked you to take care of me,' she added wistfully.

For a moment Miss Taylor hesitated, and then she replied, 'Darling, I would give anything to have you with me; but it is impossible. I have only two little rooms right up at the top of a high house in the old part of Paris, and I am very seldom at home. I could not take care of you there, and you would not know what to do with yourself all day.'

'I could go to school,' suggested Muriel.

Miss Taylor shook her head. 'Girls do not go to school alone in Paris. I should have to take you to school and bring you back, and I should not be able to do that very often, for I should be painting, and could not leave off. You must not think I do not love you more than my painting; but you know I am not rich, and I must work hard so as to learn to paint well, and then we will live together. I do not like the Bohemian life for myself, and I should hate it for you.'

Muriel sighed. 'Well, I will try to do what you and father wish; but if I cannot bear it I may come to you. You promise me that?'

Miss Taylor could not help noticing that this time the child put her first and her father last, and she could not help being touched by it, and this made her say, perhaps rather unwisely, 'Yes, dear, I promise you that if you really cannot bear it you shall come to me at once; but if you knew what my little flat was like you would not want to come; you would much rather go to a comfortable school. Why, do you know that very often I have no time to cook any dinner for myself, and go to a restaurant to eat. For you know I have no servant.'

'No servant!' said the little girl in surprise. 'Then who sweeps the rooms for you?'

'The *concierge's* wife—that is, the wife of the hall-porter, as he would be called in England.'

'It must be a grand house if you have a hall-porter,' said Muriel, who had only seen hall-porters at big houses.

Miss Taylor smiled as she explained that every house in Paris had a hall-porter, however poor a house it was. 'Not that this is a poor house; it is a very large house, and very clean, and I would far rather live in that old part of Paris, which is interesting and picturesque, than in the fine new part, even if I were rich enough.'

'And so should I,' declared Muriel. 'I am just as artistic as you. Father says so; it is in the family,

and I should be much happier with you, and one can't begin too soon with one's artistic education,' she wound up.

'I am glad to hear you say so,' said Miss Taylor, suppressing a smile at the old-fashioned way her niece spoke; 'because that means, I hope, that you intend to work hard at your drawing at school.'

Miss Taylor said this in the hope that it would reconcile Muriel to going to school, or at least make her see some advantage in it; but it did not do so.

On the contrary, the girl replied, 'That is just what I shall not be able to do. They only give you two hours a week to draw in at school; my drawing-master told me so, and said that he hated giving lessons in girls' schools, because it was quite impossible to teach anything to such a number of girls in such a short time, even if they wanted to learn, and he says they do not.'

This was discouraging, but Miss Taylor had a sudden inspiration. 'Can you tell me the name of the school your drawing-master teaches in?' she inquired. 'Because, perhaps, you might go to that school, and I would ask father to let you have special lessons in drawing from him.'

In one way this was a good idea of Miss Taylor's, because this drawing-master had given Muriel lessons for the last two years, and not only did he give excellent lessons, but he was a great favourite with the girl, and had been very good to her, staying long after his time was up to talk to and teach his pupil,

who was evidently a great favourite with him. Therefore Miss Taylor thought, and rightly so, that he would be a link with the past as well as a great source of pleasure to Muriel, who was really fond of and had a taste for drawing.

She felt herself rewarded when the girl's face lighted up as she answered readily, 'He teaches at the Hill House School, and that is the best school round here, he says.'

'Would you like to go there if I hear that it is suitable?' inquired her aunt, relieved to find that her niece was favourably disposed towards one school at least.

'I should not like to go to any school. I want to come and live with you; but as you don't want me, I would rather go to a school where Mr Brown teaches, and which he says is the best, than to any other,' replied Muriel indifferently.

'Very well, I will make inquiries and see whether they can take you,' said Miss Taylor cheerfully; though whether she would have done so had she known what the result would be is doubtful. Before she set out to make the arrangements, which she thought she had better do that day, as time was precious both to her and to her brother, she tried once again to make Muriel see that it was not because she did not want her that she did not allow the girl to come to her in Paris.

'Indeed, Muriel, if I thought only of myself I should take you back with me next week. I am

often very lonely over there, and I should be only too glad to have my dear niece with me, and when I came back in the evening it would be delightful to have her there to talk to; but it would not be delightful for her, and it would be very selfish of me to think of such a thing,' she explained.

Muriel said nothing, but she looked appeased, and saw her aunt off to make inquiries about the Hill House School with a more cheerful face than she had worn since her arrival.

Miss Taylor accordingly interviewed the head of the Hill House School, who was a very superior and well-educated woman, and had the reputation of 'getting her pupils on,' as indeed she must have done to hold her own against the numerous High Schools and other girls' public schools in the neighbourhood or within reach by tram or train.

It all sounded very satisfactory. Miss Stephens agreed at once to the extra lessons in drawing, and said that she was always glad to encourage any talent a girl might have, and spoke most highly of Mr Brown as a drawing-master.

There seemed nothing better to do than to arrange for Muriel to enter next week on the same day that her father sailed, for he declined to part with her before it was absolutely necessary; and yet, as she walked home, and again when all was settled, Miss Taylor felt misgivings, and wondered whether she ought not to give up her art and devote herself to her niece. But her brother would not hear of such a

thing. 'She will be quite happy there, you will see. All girls dread school before they have been to one, and they all like it when they get there, and cry more when they leave than when they go. And so it will be with Muriel, you will see.'

Miss Taylor sighed, and only said that she hoped so too.

'If I did not feel sure of it I would ask you to take her with you and send her to a school in Paris; but she would be a great trouble, or'—as Miss Taylor protested—'at least a great responsibility; and you should be free to give your whole mind to your work. It is impossible to succeed otherwise,' he said with a sigh.

And then Miss Taylor guessed how his wife's ill-health had stood in the way of her brother's success, though he would never allow it.

The house was let furnished to the new doctor, who was a bachelor, and was only too glad to drop into a small practice and a house all ready for him. Mr Taylor was able to start in less than a fortnight from the time he had lost his wife; and on the same day, after seeing him off, Miss Taylor took her niece to the Hill House School and left her there, and then drove on to Victoria Station to take the boat-train for Paris.

Never had she started for the Continent with so heavy a heart, and never had she felt so lonely, and more than once she wished she had been selfish enough to take her niece with her, and found herself

wondering how she should be able to work at her painting with the thought of the little girl alone at her new school in England. The child's despairing eyes haunted her as soon as she arrived at her flat, and she wrote a letter saying, 'Remember, if you are very unhappy I will have you over here at once.' It was foolish, and so Miss Taylor later on felt it to be; but at the moment she felt she must write, and she did:

'My dearest Muriel,—The sun is setting over the roofs of the houses and lighting up the Church of the Sacré Cœur on Montmartre; and, going out on my balcony to enjoy the sight, I found that I wanted my niece Muriel so much that I came in again. Angelique tells me that M. Goupil is painting a picture with a scene from Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*. I wonder whether he will bring in the Cathedral itself. I just caught sight of it in the sunset. It seems to me more beautiful every time I see it. I wonder whether you will admire it as much as I do when you come to Paris, which I hope you will do before long.

'Work hard and gain as much knowledge as you can; you will want it if you are an artist—a true artist, I mean. I am reading Victor Hugo's romance, so as to understand Monsieur Goupil's picture better, and perhaps Notre Dame itself.

'The picture post-card I sent you to-day to tell of my safe arrival is of one of the Chimeras on Notre

Dame; it is more curious than beautiful. Remember, if you are very unhappy I will have you over here at once. Good-night.—Your loving AUNT LU.'

And Muriel went to bed with the letter under her pillow, and took it out at intervals to press to her cheek to comfort her.

## CHAPTER III.

### L'ANGE DE L'ATELIER.

AND so the three so closely united by affection and family ties—father, daughter, and aunt—had parted, and were soon far from each other; the first on a voyage to China as ship's surgeon, the second at a very good private boarding-school in London, and the third to resume her artistic studies in Paris.

Louise Taylor (or Lu, as she was generally called) was kindly received by the good-hearted *concierge's* wife when she arrived in her sombre mourning, which set off her fair complexion and bright hair.

'I have taken the liberty of lighting a little fire for you in my sitting-room, and have arranged a repast, for I said the little *appartement* above would be cold to you to-night, mademoiselle,' explained the kind woman; and the sympathetic thought and words brought the tears into the eyes of the lonely English girl as she accepted the little 'repast' of good soup and 'bifstek' *à l'Anglais* in the spirit in which it was offered.

Madame Laval even came upstairs in the evening with her lodger, and stayed with her while the latter unpacked the box she had brought from England, talking all the time, and loitering because she did not like to leave the girl alone.

When at last she did go, it was with the parting advice to go to bed at once, and get up next morning in order to go out and make some more of those beautiful pictures that would one day make her celebrated.

Miss Lu Taylor smiled as she disclaimed any expectation of becoming famous, but she felt comforted; and though she missed her niece, and wished she were there to say good-night to her, she felt that, lonely as she was, it was Muriel who should be pitied, for Miss Stephens had not struck her as very sympathetic, and she doubted whether the teacher would be lingering by the child's bedside as the kind Frenchwoman had been at hers. Then she wrote the letter which comforted Muriel so much.

When Madame Laval left Miss Taylor's room, and was just going downstairs, a head was put out of a room on the same landing, and a piquant face looked, smiling, into Madame Laval's. '*Eh bien*, she has come back, poor girl! Is she very sad?' the girl inquired.

'As for that, she does not show her feelings, being English and well-conducted; but she is sad, of course. Ah, what a nice young lady, always diligent and quiet, no trouble in any way!'

'As I am, you would say. Well, I know all that; and to save you the pain of saying so disagreeable a thing every time you see me, I am going to write on my door: "This is the *appartement* of a troublesome *locataire* who is never quiet or composed or anything that she ought to be, like her fellow art-student."

And if you have nothing else to tell me, I will say *bon soir*, and go and write it now,' retorted the French girl.

'Mademoiselle, I beg you will do no such thing. I will not have any nonsense written outside the doors. It is not seemly, and it would annoy Miss Tay'——

'*Ah bah!* I do not mean to write it outside, but inside; and as your paragon never condescends to enter my room, there is no fear of her being "shocked." But you *ennuie* me. Tell me some news.'

Madame Laval dearly loved a gossip, though it was never ill-natured, and she could not help liking the merry French girl, though she did not approve of her and her noisy and racketing ways, as she called them, so she came into the room; but her first exclamation was one of disapproval. '*Mais*, what have you got there, mademoiselle? It is surely the Evil One. No wonder Miss Taylor does not come into your room; she would be shocked to see that dreadful creature in red, with the flaming eyes. It is wicked to paint such things. Why do you not paint pretty little pictures like'——

'Oh, oh, spare me!' cried Angelique, putting her hands to her ears. 'As for Mephistopheles, he is a very good study; but let him be. Do not look at him if he does not please you.'

'He does not indeed. I do not know the monsieur, but he is uncommonly like what I should imagine the Evil One to be. Now, Mademoiselle de Ségur, why

do you not try to be serious, and make friends with your fellow-student? She would be a good friend for you, and you would enliven her; and, though you do not like me to say so, I feel sure she would tell you to stop making foolish pictures.' Here Madame Laval waved her hand towards the caricatures, some of them very clever, with which the walls were covered.

Mademoiselle Angelique gave her mouth a little twist. 'And paint pretty little babies with their arms round dogs or holding pretty flowers? No, thank you, I prefer these;' and she gave a wave of her hand and an exact imitation of Madame Laval's voice and gesture.

Madame shook her head, but could not help smiling as she took her leave. And Angelique stood where she was for a moment; then, going up to Mephistopheles, she took him down, saying, 'Dear friend, you are not appreciated by my visitors,' and put the sketch into a portfolio. Then she went to Miss Taylor's door and knocked softly. But the English girl either did not hear or did not wish to answer, for she made no reply; and Angelique went back to her own room humming one of the student-songs which Miss Taylor disliked so much.

The girl-students at Monsieur Goupil's studio looked up sympathetically at Miss Taylor when she entered the next morning clad in fresh black, which (owing to the fact that Angelique lived in the same house) they knew was for the relative to whose sickbed the

English girl had hastened at a moment's notice. If it had been a fellow-countrywoman they would have clustered round her and told her how sorry they were, and have asked many questions; but after a glance at Louise Taylor's composed face they said '*Bon jour*,' as usual, and went on with their painting or arranging their easels and canvases without making any comment upon their fellow-student's absence or its cause, with one exception; and this exception was Angelique, whom her comrades called in irony L'Ange de l'Atelier, because they declared that her name was a misnomer, and that if she had been called a mischievous sprite it would have been more suitable, so full of mischief and pranks was she.

Angelique had made many attempts at friendship with the reserved English girl, but so far with little success. This morning, however, she made another effort to break down the 'northern ice,' as she called it.

*Le maître* had noticed that his English pupil, who was a great favourite of his because she was 'so serious' and worked so steadily and intelligently, was back in her place; and, coming to her, began to offer his condolences. 'I see that your visit, alas! has not terminated happily'—— he began, when he and all the students were startled by a piercing shriek from Angelique, whose easel stood next to that of the English girl.

The master turned swiftly round, and naturally glanced at the French girl's canvas, after seeing which

he too uttered an exclamation. 'What have you been doing to your study? It was quite possible yesterday, and now'—— He gave a wave of his hand, as much as to say, 'You may tear it up.'

'I, monsieur? Say, rather, what have you done with your sleeve? Ruined my beautiful work, and then you scold me! Such is the injustice of this world!'

The master looked disturbed for a moment, glanced at his sleeve doubtfully, then examined it more carefully, and, seeing it was not wet with paint, gave an impatient 'Pshaw!' and passed on.

Miss Taylor looked at Angelique's study, and saw that there was a smudge across the face which could never have been done by a brush. She wondered why the painter had not apologised for his awkwardness, and said so to Angelique.

The French girl gave a little twist of her mouth to prevent herself laughing, and remarked, 'To be just, I begin to think it was not *le maître*, but this rag;' and she showed Miss Taylor a rag which was smeared with fresh black paint. 'He wearied me just then, so I sent him off.'

Miss Taylor was just going to ask why, when it struck her that the French girl had wished to spare her the well-meant condolences of the great artist, which she was glad enough to have escaped at the moment. So she said simply, 'Thank you, mademoiselle.'

'*Ah, mon dieu*, Mademoiselle Taylor, I do not know

He gave a wave of his hand, as much as to say, 'You may tear it up.'

M. PAGE 32.

what you are thanking Mademoiselle l'Ange for; but I can assure you it is little enough we have to thank her for. She keeps our master in a constant fury. I wonder he does not send her away,' said another student.

'He is not likely to deprive himself of his most promising pupil,' said Angelique. 'He is only too glad to have real talent amongst so much mediocrity.'

'*Par exemple!* if it is a proof of talent to decorate our canvases with miserable caricatures in our absence, which we cannot efface before they are looked at, then you may be talented; otherwise'—— Here words apparently failed the speaker, who raised her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders, and then gave an impatient little exclamation, which Miss Taylor, looking up, saw was caused by Angelique having leant over to her neighbour's canvas, and with a swift sweep of her brush sketched the speaker with eyebrows uplifted.

Though far from being in a gay mood, Miss Taylor could not suppress a smile—it was so cleverly and quickly done; and in a moment Angelique was back at work again, and busy washing out her own smudge.

There was a ripple of laughter from those of the students who were near enough to see the clever caricature, followed by a hush and assumed look of gravity as the master turned to see what was the matter. The latest sufferer from Angelique's love of mischief was angrily rubbing at the obnoxious carica-

ture with a rag, and the master came up to her in time to see what was wrong. 'Ah, no need to ask whose handiwork this is!' Here he looked long at it.—'If you were to take half the trouble over doing good work that you do over folly like this I should have hopes of you; but I begin to think that you will be only good for second-rate comic papers.'

'If you will be so good as to write that down, monsieur, I will take it to the editor of the paper and get work at once,' said Angelique promptly.

The master passed on without further comment. To argue or reason with Angelique de Ségur was hopeless.

Then work went on in silence, for the master did not allow time to be wasted in talking, as a rule.

Miss Taylor found herself wonderfully tired when lunch-time came, though the morning had been successful, and she had actually won a word of praise from Monsieur Goupil—a rare occurrence, for the great painter was chary of his praise, and 'very *difficile*,' as his pupils said with sighs. One or two of them grudged the English girl her small success, and muttered something about favouring foreigners, but were stopped by a quick repartee from Angelique, who followed Louise Taylor out of the studio when she left it.

'Are you going to No. 3 *bis* to lunch?' she inquired. No. 3 *bis* was the number at which they both lived.

'No, I think not,' was Miss Taylor's rather short

response, for, as has been said, she made friends with none of her fellow-students.

But this morning Angelique was not to be snubbed. 'Then, if you will allow me, I will take you to a small restaurant where the students of the Beaux Arts lunch'—— she began.

But Miss Taylor broke in hastily, 'Thank you, but I do not think I should care for it;' and then she felt ashamed of her rudeness, and added, 'I do not much care for restaurants.'

'No; and you do not much care for students, specially French art-students. Oh yes, of course we all know that, and that you despise the profession you have chosen; but you need not be afraid. This is the restaurant where your great writer Thackeray Makepeace used to dine when he was a student at the Beaux Arts, and very respectable English people frequent it.'

'Do you mean William Makepeace Thackeray?' inquired Miss Taylor with interest. 'I did not know he had been an art-student.'

'I do not think you know much about us at all; but come and lunch with me there to-day. You will hear very interesting conversation, and it will distract you from thinking of your work—which one should not do at meal-times,' added Angelique as she saw that Miss Taylor shrank from any allusion to the troubles from which her attention should be distracted.

So Miss Taylor went with the French girl, and

found the little restaurant on the Boulevard St Germain, with the placard painted by a later student representing Thackeray talking to the restaurant-keeper, and she was much interested to find that his memory was thus kept green, and that English art-students came here and had a long table, at which only English people were allowed to sit, in memory of the great man.

'As I, alas! am only a French girl, we must either separate or you must sacrifice yourself and sit in a less honourable place,' observed Angelique when this was told her.

'Of course I will sit at a side-table. I should prefer it,' said Miss Taylor; and added, 'How interested my niece will be when I tell her where I have lunched! She takes an interest in all I do.'

A pleased look came into Angelique's eyes, for this was the first time Miss Taylor had ever spoken of her family to the French girl; but she only said in a would-be indifferent tone, 'She is in England, I suppose? Has she ever been to Paris?'

'Not yet. I hope she will come some day. She is at school now, poor child, and I am afraid she will not like it. She would like to live with me.'

Mademoiselle Angelique did not ask why the child did not live with her parents. As a matter of fact, she knew all about Muriel from Madame Laval, who chattered constantly about the English demoiselle, who was so quiet and well-behaved, to Angelique, who was not quiet at all; but the latter had too

much tact to let Miss Taylor know of her acquaintance with her companion's private affairs, and only replied, 'And why should she not come to you?'

'Oh, it would never do. She has been used to a regular life and a proper home.'

Angelique sighed. 'How proper you English are! I wonder is it comfortable?'

Miss Taylor stared at her. 'I do not understand,' she observed at length.

'I mean, is it comfortable to think always if a thing is proper instead of thinking if it is convenient? But I suppose you are so used to it that it comes natural, like your horrid stiff collars and tailor robes, which are like boards round your necks—well, not the robes; the collars, of course, I mean, which I will never wear, though you have made them the fashion here—no, not if I am left the only person without a stiff collar in Paris.'

'I don't think you need be afraid of that. Your countrywomen are too fond of comfort, as you call it, to take to our stiff collars. I cannot imagine a Frenchwoman without a frill somewhere.'

Angelique laughed and shrugged her shoulders. 'But your niece—will she come? I should like to see her.'

'In the holidays, when I go into the country, perhaps. Not to my flat; I do not wish her to come there,' said Miss Taylor decidedly.

'Perhaps you are right. It is a noisy part, and I think children should all be brought up in the

country; they become so nervous and precocious if they live in big towns,' replied Mademoiselle Angelique.

Miss Taylor was surprised at her seriousness, and came to the conclusion that she had misjudged her companion. She little knew the restraint that Angelique was putting on herself so as to be 'proper,' like her English friend. As it was, the lively French girl was glad when the lunch came to an end; and they got up to go back to the studio, where she was so restless that her two nearest neighbours declared that she made them nervous and unable to work.

Before the day was quite over Miss Taylor, complaining of headache, went away, after which Angelique broke out into all sorts of wild mischief, decorating the model, an old man with a long beard who was sitting as a beggar, with a laurel crown and a sword, which, as her fellow-students declared, completely ruined him in their eyes as a beggar for that day.

'Very well, then, let us stop. The inspiration has ceased to pour in upon us, and we shall do no more good to-day,' said Angelique; and she was just going to relieve the model of his 'sceptre and crown,' as she called them, when the master, who had been absent, returned, and seeing her latest prank, announced that Mademoiselle Angelique was 'relieved from attendance at the studio for the rest of that day, by the end of which she might have gained a little sense.'

'*Mon dieu*, what a bear!' she said with a little face

as she took her hat and went off. But at heart she was greatly vexed. She had set her heart on becoming friends with the proud, reserved English girl; and it was partly annoyance at her fellow-lodger for having gone home early to avoid her, as Angelique thought, and quite rightly, that had made her so irritable, and now she felt sure that Miss Taylor had been 'shocked' at something. 'She is always shocked,' she said to herself.

However, there was no help for it; and with quick, impatient steps she made her way home, and overtook the English girl just as she reached No. 3 *bis*.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A RUNAWAY.

'AH, Mademoiselle Taylor, *bon soir!* What a height one has to climb to our little dens!—that is how you call them, I think, in English,' said the irrepressible Angelique as she joined the English girl.

'I like being high up. The air is better, and one does not hear the noise of the street so much,' replied Miss Taylor politely if distantly.

'Ah yes! Now I, on the contrary, like to hear some signs of life—it makes me less lonely; and when the students pass by singing I join in—not loud, of course, but to amuse and divert myself,' observed Angelique as the two mounted the high stairs.

'Yes, I hear you sometimes,' replied Miss Taylor, and reproached herself for having been annoyed at the snatches of song she heard from next-door; it had not occurred to her that the French girl might also be lonely; but still she said a little stiffly, 'I think I would rather be alone than with those students.'

'I suppose they shock you. Well, I like to amuse myself, and I find most things amusing—even you, mademoiselle.'

Lu Taylor looked up in surprise. 'I?' she said gravely.

'Yes, you with your stiff manner, as if you had no joints,' cried Angelique, and she nodded gaily as her companion, who had just arrived at her door, said 'Good-evening' and went in without inviting the French girl to enter.

'*Bête* that thou art! why didst thou say that? Thou knewest that it would offend her; but'—with a little shake of herself—'I must be myself, and I could not be serious any more this evening; it is too difficult for long. Well, well, I must try to-morrow; for I will try to make friends with her.'

The English girl went into her room, and a feeling of loneliness came over her as she sat down; but again she thought she had found another reason for remaining alone. Angelique would be no companion for Muriel, and somehow Lu Taylor felt that it would be impossible to keep her fellow-student at a distance, as she had hitherto done, and as if somehow she did not wish to do so, for either the girl's loneliness or some chord she had struck had found an echo in the English girl, and a friendly feeling had sprung up in her heart towards her fellow-artist.

Still, as she looked round the little bedroom and not much larger sitting-room and studio combined, with a tiny cupboard for a kitchen, she shook her head and murmured, 'It would have been impossible. If Muriel could only see this flat she would know that it was impossible.'

But Muriel could not see the flat, and was at that very minute sobbing her heart out at the thought that

no one wanted her now, not even the 'dear, beloved aunt' on whose affection she had relied now that her father's had failed her.

Miss Stephens was not sympathetic, and did not take to Muriel at first, which was not altogether surprising, for the child had not been taught to 'speak when you 're spoken to,' and gave her opinion as to what she ought to learn and what she ought not, in a way that exasperated her mistresses.

But the last straw for poor Muriel was the non-appearance of her drawing-master. He had at last received the reward of his labours, and been appointed head of a School of Art, and had not time to give lessons at Miss Stephens' school; so, to Muriel's disappointment, another master came in his place, and took no special interest in the girl, who therefore had not even this link with the past.

Her resolution was quickly taken. It was unbearable, and she should write and tell her aunt so, and with this intention she sat down to write a letter to Miss Taylor.

Unfortunately she chose the time when she ought to have been at a lecture—Miss Stephens never called her lessons anything but lectures—by the head-mistress, and she was, of course, missed and fetched.

'You must not write letters during the week, Muriel. Sunday is the day for letter-writing. Put away that letter at once,' said the teacher sent by Miss Stephens to find her missing pupil.

'But it is on a matter of great importance,' protested Muriel. 'Please let me finish it.'

'The only important matter at present is for you to learn obedience, which you do not seem to understand,' replied the teacher.

And Muriel, seeing that it was no good, put the letter away, saying as she did so, 'I can't wait till Sunday, please. I must write it some time to-day. It is to my aunt in Paris.'

'If it is something that you really want, you can tell Miss Stephens, and she will see about it for you. There is no necessity to write to your aunt. You wrote to her on Sunday last, did you not?'

'Yes; but I did not know about the drawing-master,' observed Muriel.

'It is not necessary to write to Miss Taylor about that,' replied the teacher sharply. 'Miss Stephens is quite at liberty to choose whom she will to give lessons in her school, and if your aunt does not approve of her choice she can remove you at the end of the term; but there is no hurry about that.'

Naturally this conversation, repeated to the head-mistress, did not prejudice her in Muriel's favour, and she was colder to the girl than ever; and as Muriel was not given to showing her feelings in public, the teacher had no idea that the girl was grieving for her mother. In fact, she had remarked, *à propos* of her new pupil, on the rapidity with which children forget, and had felt what sympathy she had for Muriel Taylor crushed by her manner.

Muriel went off to the lesson or lecture with her mind fully made up; write to her aunt she would, and after the morning lessons were over she made her way to the office in which Miss Stephens was wont to sit to correct her books and transact school business, and knocked at the door—not aggressively, it is true, but still not with the timid knock of a pupil.

'Come in,' said the head-mistress, looking up from her writing, at the same time in readiness to greet her visitor.

Her face changed a little when she saw who it was, and she asked rather coldly, 'Well, Muriel, what do you want?'

If she had spoken more kindly perhaps Muriel might have opened her heart, which was bursting; but the cold tones froze her tears, which were very near the surface.

'Please, Miss Stephens, I want to write to my aunt Lu,' she said simply.

'Were you not told that it was against the rules to write letters on week-days?' replied Miss Stephens.

'Yes; but this is very important, and I must write,' persisted Muriel.

It was not the way to conciliate Miss Stephens, who coloured with anger and said, 'There is no *must* in the matter. I am the only person who is allowed to use that word in this establishment. Now, go back to your schoolroom, and remember I forbid you to write to Miss Taylor. I shall write to her myself, and beg

her not to encourage you to disobey the rules of the school.'

'But Aunt Lu said I was to write to her at once if —if I wanted to,' cried Muriel.

There was no more to be said. Miss Stephens looked too forbidding to be argued with, and Muriel went away with her head hanging down in a most dejected manner. It was only Tuesday, and she was not to write until Sunday. She did not know how she was to bear it; she had always had her own way, and been petted and treated as an equal, and she felt terribly lonely and forlorn, and had to struggle not to give way and let the tears come.

However, she did keep them back, and sat there, with hot, dry eyes, apparently learning history, while her active brain was busy making plans.

Some idea of obedience Muriel certainly had, and her father had requested her to do what Miss Stephens told her; so when the head-mistress formally forbade her to write before Sunday the girl had no idea of disobeying.

Then a bright idea struck her. Miss Stephens had not said anything about sending a telegram, and Aunt Lu, on the contrary, had said—so as to show that she was not so far off after all—that she could get a telegram in an hour if it was sent off at once. So Muriel decided to send a telegram to her aunt, and wrote on a piece of paper, 'It is unbearable.—MURIEL.' This she addressed to Miss Taylor, 3 *bis* Rue de la Montagne de St Geneva—that was all, not even Paris, which important part of the address she forgot in her

agitation. It was not the right name at all, for the street Miss Taylor lived in was named after Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris, so that it is not surprising that the telegram which Muriel gave, with sixpence for himself, to a passing boy never arrived at its destination.

The boy honestly did his part, and gave in the telegram, with the money, which was the correct amount, because poor Muriel remembered how much her father had paid for the telegram he sent to summon her aunt not a month ago; but he could not tell the name or address of the sender, so the clerk, to whom it was a matter of indifference, sent it off to Geneva, leaving it to the employés at the other end to find out the proper address.

So Muriel waited in vain for an answer, and things did, indeed, become hard, for she was in a state of expectation, and found it difficult to attend to her lessons though she tried to do so. And then she did not get on either with girls or teachers; they did not understand her quaint way of talking, so old for her years, and took what was her natural manner of expressing herself as affectation or conceit.

Two long days did Muriel wait for an answer, and then, when none came, and she felt utterly miserable, she took another resolution. She made up her mind to go to Paris to her aunt Lu.

As soon as she had decided upon this her heart grew light again, and she said to herself that she was sure she had done right, 'or else,' she argued, 'I should

not feel so happy. One does not feel happy unless one does what is right.' Her mother had taught her this, and she had not forgotten it. Money was not any difficulty, as it happened, for her father had given her a five-pound note when he left her, and nothing else troubled her. She did not think of saying good-bye to any one. And as she was an only child she had been obliged to go out alone, and had sometimes even gone in an omnibus alone; so, starting at the same time as her aunt had done, which was before school in the morning, when all the girls were in the recreation-ground, and taking a little bag containing her most treasured possessions and a few toilette necessaries with her, she started light-heartedly on her travels.

The 'bus took her straight to Victoria, where she found herself with a quarter of an hour to spare before the train started, so she walked boldly to the booking-office and asked for a ticket to Paris.

Muriel was a very small girl to be travelling so far alone, and the booking-clerk inquired how many tickets.

'One, please,' replied the child.

'Are you going all that way alone?' he asked in surprise.

'Yes,' replied Muriel simply.

The man demurred about taking the five-pound note, and asked her to write her name and address upon it.

'I have no address,' she said after she had written her name.

'No address! How old are you, miss?' he then demanded.

'Fourteen years old; and please make haste and give me my ticket, or I shall lose the train.'

'She wants to have a ticket to Paris, but I don't know about giving her one. It looks fishy to me. Some one may have put her up to changing the note, and she may not be going after all,' he remarked to a fellow-clerk.—'How is it that you have no address in England? Where have you lived?'

'We lived in Southwood before my mother died, but now the house is let, and my father has gone on a voyage, and I am going to my aunt in Paris,' explained Muriel, her lip quivering as she spoke of these sad events.

Her tale carried conviction, and the elder clerk said to the younger, 'Give her the ticket and be quick. Can't you see she is in mourning, poor girl? Here, give me the ticket and the change, and I will see her into the train myself.'

So that difficulty was over, and Muriel—accompanied by the good-natured clerk, who had children himself—took her seat in the train, thanks to his forethought with some provisions, and the money safe in a little bag in her pocket, with a few francs of French money among it.

There was time before the train started to provide herself with something to read, and she saw a magazine with an article upon Napoleon. Napoleon was no favourite with Muriel, whose education consisted chiefly

in desultory reading. She had read a Life of the great Emperor with her mother, and had never forgiven him for his remark that 'one must break eggs to make an omelette;' as Muriel said he looked upon human beings as eggs, and broke all and any who stood in his way, or who he thought stood in his way. But still, Napoleon was connected with Paris, and everything connected with Paris interested Muriel, so she bought that magazine and read the article, which was founded upon a new Life of Napoleon I.

Muriel was glad she had bought it, because it told many interesting facts about the great little man which she had never heard, and mentioned many places in Paris which she made up her mind to go and see; and as the train was going off she wrote in a little note-book which she had attached to a chatelaine hitherto as an ornament: '*N.B.*—The Elysée Palace was the favourite residence of Napoleon, and here he signed his abdication after the battle of Waterloo, where his brother Lucien, who had never bowed to him in his prosperity, awaited him to comfort him. It is now the residence of the President of the French Republic. Ask Aunt Lu to go and see it.'

There would be such a number of delightful places to visit in Paris, Muriel said to herself as she settled herself in her seat and built castles in the air as to what she should do in Paris, where she seemed to think she was going to have a long holiday, doing lessons in the desultory way she had done with her mother.

It was not until they were well on their way to Newhaven that doubts of the rightness of her proceedings began to dawn upon Muriel. She had been so accustomed to have her own way in everything as a matter of course that she had an idea that her way was the right one, and never having had any brothers—who have a way of 'knocking some sense,' as they call it, into their sisters—nor even a sister to whom she was obliged to give way, she had no notion of doing so.

But now a feeling of depression came over her. She was leaving her mother's grave; and though that mother had spoilt her, and given her too great an idea of her own importance and capabilities, still she had taught her good principles, and when she was not blinded by self-will Muriel knew right from wrong well enough; and to walk off coolly without saying a word to any one she knew was not right. Only, the present one was an exceptional case; which perhaps it was, and indeed there were excuses to be made for her. So this was how she excused herself, and succeeded in stilling the voice which told her even now to go back, and crushed down all feelings of regret.

'No,' said Muriel to herself as she stepped out of the train with her fellow-travellers, who had been so kind and asked her to keep with them—'no, I can't go back.' Then, with a half-smile on her lips, she muttered, 'Never withdraw; never retract; never apologise.' She had just read it in the article, in which the writer had given this motto as the cause of

Napoleon's success, and the lady she was travelling with wondered what the girl was repeating to herself.

Perhaps, too, the thought that she would look so foolish if she were suddenly to say good-bye to her new acquaintances and go back may have influenced her. At all events, she did *not* go back, but went on board and was soon on her way to Aunt Lu and Paris.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

ONE evening, as she was coming home from the studio, Lu Taylor heard a voice behind her saying, '*Mon dieu*, how tedious it has been to-day! I have not amused myself at all.'

Lu Taylor turned and saw, as she expected, the mischievous face of Angelique de Ségur smiling mockingly at her. 'I thought it very interesting,' she replied. 'Monsieur Goupil has always something original to say.'

'That, of course; but when he talks up in the clouds about the "mission of art" he wearies me. I do not paint for a mission, not I!'

Miss Taylor did not reply. She had felt stirred by the lecture of the master, and her companion's remarks grated upon her, a fact which the latter was quick to grasp. 'Ah, you perhaps have a mission. Tell me, what is it?'

The French girl asked with so much apparent sincerity that Miss Taylor answered as sincerely, 'I think every artist has, and that is to bring beauty and the Ideal into the life of all who will accept them.'

'H'm, for my part, such ideas are too lofty for me. If I have a mission, it is to make people laugh; as for

beauty, I leave that for my betters. I do not even know what beauty is; and as for an ideal, my ideal is to have an air-ship which I can manage myself, and with which I shall fly—fly everywhere, and amuse myself.—Well, *petit*, what do you want?' As she said this the French girl bent down to speak to a little beggar-boy, who, with dirty face and ragged clothes, was running alongside of them saying something in a whining voice.

Lu Taylor walked on. She never gave to beggars in the street, and she was glad of an excuse for leaving her companion, whose views she did not share.

Angelique did not follow her, but after listening to the tiny boy's story, said, 'Thou livest here—in this house? And thy mother is ill and hungry? *Allons donc*, lead me to her, and I will see what we can do to cure her.'

The little fellow led her down some broken steps and into a cellar, and there the girl found that, for a wonder, he had told the truth, and that his mother was ill and hungry.

'Indeed, mademoiselle, I would not have the boy beg if I could help it,' said the mother in answer to Angelique's remonstrances; 'but what can I do? I have been ill and out of work for so long, and without nourishing food how can I get well? That is all I want.'

'We will see what can be done. I will get milk for you from the Sisters, and for just now Pierre—is

that your name?—will come with me and get some. I live in this street too, and I will be back directly. *Au revoir*, madame.'

And off went Angelique, with her small friend holding her hand and talking gaily and laughing at her sallies of wit, till they came to a milk-shop, where she purchased what was necessary, and, laden with her purchases, she and the little boy returned to the cellar, where, laughing and making absurd jokes all the time, she gave the woman milk and eggs, and a basin of bread-and-milk to the boy; and after tidying up the room in the most methodical way, left the two, laughing as she went out, and protesting that the broken steps endangered her life.

But Lu Taylor walked on, feeling strangely depressed, probably the reaction from the strain of the day, and feeling very lonely as she entered her room with no congenial spirit to share her thoughts.

Perhaps, too, a letter which she had just received from Miss Stephens, complaining of Muriel's want of discipline, or rather lack of knowledge as to the respect and submission due to her superiors, had depressed the young aunt, whom the head-mistress, as she had warned Muriel she should, had begged to discourage her niece from being discontented. 'Otherwise I shall not be able to keep her in my school, as we have no time to attend to disobedient pupils.' So Miss Stephens wound up. It was not a sympathetic letter to write about a pupil, especially one who had just lost her mother, and again Miss

Taylor half-regretted having placed her niece at Hill House School.

However, it was not her habit to give way to such repining; and as she took off her hat and jacket and smoothed back the soft brown hair which stood out like a halo round her head to her discomfort, she hummed a song, which was probably the reason that she did not hear sooner the voice of the wife of the *concierge* talking in excited accents to some one whom she was apparently encouraging to make a last effort to get up the last flight of stairs.

'*Voilà*, this is the door; it is over at last, the long mount, poor *petite*. It is just dead with fatigue that she is, but you will soon be with the good aunt.—Miss Taylor, mademoiselle, are you in? Open quick; here is a visitor for you,' she cried, as she knocked at the door of Miss Taylor's flat.

It was in no very hospitable spirit that Miss Taylor went to open the door to this unexpected visitor, and before she did it she put away the preparations which she had made for her frugal evening meal, and shut the door of the tiny kitchen, where a little spirit-lamp was alight with a kettle on it to make a cup of tea.

She could not imagine who could be coming to call upon her, but concluded that it must be her fellow girl-student Angelique, who was evidently irrepressible, and who wanted to persuade her to come out to supper or one of the students' concerts—to which, however, she was never to be persuaded to go after

she had once been, and for which she was not at all in the mood to-day.

But instead of the merry girl-artist whom she expected to see—and whom, by the way, she rather wondered to find the wife of the *concierge* troubling to introduce—there stood, supported by the stout arm of the kindly Frenchwoman, the most woebegone and white-faced girl Louise had ever seen.

For one long moment she stood struck dumb, and, then she cried, 'Muriel, oh my darling!' and poor, tired Muriel was sobbing in her aunt's arms.

'Oh Aunt Lu! Aunt Lu! I am so sorry I came! Oh, why did you tell me it was quite an easy journey? I do feel so dreadfully ill, and all the way across I felt as if I were dying. Oh! I wish I had not been so naughty,' cried the poor girl, whose first experience of the sea this was.

Poor Miss Taylor was so taken aback by the unexpected appearance of her niece that she could not collect her thoughts, and she imagined from the girl's incoherent speech that she had been very naughty and had been sent away from Hill House School; though a moment's reflection might have told her that it was not likely that Miss Stephens, however unsympathetic she might be, would do such a thing as send a girl off alone to Paris, especially without warning her guardian of her arrival.

'But—how—who brought you? And why did they not tell me you were coming?' inquired Miss Taylor indignantly.

'They did not know. I came off myself, and I thought I was doing right, because I felt so unhappy at school, and you told me to come at once if I felt so unhappy and miserable,' cried the child.

'The *pauvre petite* has no doubt been seasick. Mademoiselle, the best thing you can do is to give her a cup of tea and put her to bed,' cried the practical Frenchwoman, who saw that in her bewilderment Miss Taylor was not giving her niece a very warm welcome. The timely advice awoke Miss Taylor to a sense of her duty, and she said, 'You are right, madame; this is my little niece, who has come to me all alone, poor child. I suppose she was too lonely, but it was very wrong of her.'

This was said in French, and was not quite understood by Muriel; but madame replied, 'Well, well, what affection! After all, it is the best thing she could have done. You were lonely, and she was lonely, and now you are together. It was what I said you should have done at the beginning. Now the kettle is boiling, we will make tea, and the *petite* shall have a cup, and not be scolded—*hein!*' And so saying, the motherly woman bustled about, and knowing Miss Taylor's ways and the whereabouts of her teapot and tea-things, she soon had tea ready, while Miss Taylor was bathing the tear-stained face of her niece, whom she made to lie down, and trying to comfort her while at the same time she questioned her as to her reason for this mad act.

But it was not until the child had had a cup of tea

and eaten a biscuit—she declared that she could not eat anything else, she felt too ill—that Miss Taylor began to understand the story, beginning with the lost telegram.

When she had heard it all she looked very grave, and said decidedly, 'I must take you back as soon as possible, and I must telegraph to Miss Stephens to-night to say you are with me.'

But she had not long said the words when the *concierge* himself came up with a telegram, which was from Miss Stephens, saying, 'Muriel has taken a ticket to Paris. Wire if arrived.' So Miss Taylor replied: 'Yes; am bringing her back to-morrow.'

The *concierge* had brought the telegram up himself in order to hear the contents, in which, however, he was disappointed; but he remained to give a message from his wife to the effect that if Miss Taylor required anything for the *petite*—a bed, for example, she had one folded away which Miss Taylor was welcome to use for that night.

'Ah, to be sure! I had not thought of that! Yes, monsieur, Madame Laval is very kind. I shall be very glad of the loan of a small bed for my niece for the night. She will, of course, not stay here with me.'

The man said no more, though he looked as if he would have liked to give some advice, but went down with the answer to the telegram; and presently Miss Taylor heard voices and thumpings on the stairs, and found that the worthy couple had between them

brought the little folding bed up the seven flights to her flat.

'There, it can stand in the sitting-room; and now we will make it up, for the little one looks worn-out. Ah, what a beautiful young lady! And she resembles you, mademoiselle,' said Madame Laval as she set to work to unfold the bed and make it ready for Muriel, with the sheets and blankets she had been thoughtful enough to bring up with her, saying in explanation that she thought Miss Taylor would not perhaps have any aired.

Very glad was Muriel to go to bed, and very soon was she fast asleep, her miseries and naughtiness forgotten for the time.

It was long before her young aunt followed her example, glad as she was to see her niece for even a day. The way in which she had come took all the pleasure away from the visit; besides, there was something else, and that was the extra expense which it would entail upon both her and her brother, not to mention the loss of time to her just as she was in the middle of an important study at the studio. Still, this last she would gladly have endured if it had been for some good; but it was only thanks to her own foolish weakness in promising to come and fetch her niece if she was not happy.

At last she went to sleep to dream of her sister-in-law, who seemed to say reproachfully to her, 'You promised to take care of Muriel, and this is how you do it!'

The next morning, Muriel was still sleeping when Miss Taylor got up and went downstairs to fetch her bottle of milk from the lodge of the *concierge*, who took it in for her.

'You arrive just in time again, mademoiselle; here is another telegram for you. What excitement you are having, dear, dear!'

Miss Taylor opened her telegram, which did not seem to please her. 'I trust it is not bad news, mademoiselle?' inquired the *concierge*.

'Yes—no—that is, I don't know what to do;' and then the want of an older head got the better of her reserve, and she said to Madame Laval, 'It is from the school where my niece was. The mistress begs me to keep her for the present, and says she will explain by letter. But what am I to do with the child? To-day I must go to the studio, or I ought to'——

'Of course you must go. Your studies are your first duty. The demoiselle will be quite safe with me. She shall come shopping with me, and buy what is necessary for you, and to-morrow is Sunday, when you will be at home, and after that we shall see. There, to-day is settled; she will be too much amused to see Paris for the first time to miss you. Take your milk, mademoiselle, and make your breakfast, and when that is over, and you wish to go out, I will ascend and do your room for you, and then bring the young lady down to my room.'

'You are too good, madame; she will be in your way,' objected Miss Taylor; but Madame Laval would

not hear of any other arrangement being made; so, much relieved, for the Lavals were a very superior couple (though the husband did mend shoes to increase his income), Miss Taylor made her way upstairs, and when the coffee was made she woke her niece, and the two had breakfast together.

Muriel had looked pretty last night when she was ill and worn-out after the journey, and her aunt could not help feeling with a natural pride that Madame Laval would think the child even more beautiful this morning; and now that her first annoyance had passed she began to enjoy seeing the bright face opposite to her, and to hear Muriel's intelligent if rather dogmatic remarks.

'I will write to Miss Stephens to-day, Aunt Lu, and tell her how sorry I am, and how, if I had known what crossing the sea was like, I would never have come,' she announced half-seriously and half-playfully as she drank her coffee, which she declared delicious, and much better than cook used to make it at home.

'And now, Muriel dear, I must go out to my studio,' began Miss Taylor. But Muriel's face of disappointment at the thought of being left alone made her stop, and she continued, 'Well, don't look so frightened and miserable. I will stop at home with you to-day, and we will leave a note at the studio to explain how it is that I am not able to come to finish my study.'

'No, no,' said Muriel, 'I shall not be frightened. I will stop in this room and lock the door, and

no one will hurt me. Of course you must go to your painting. I would not be so selfish as to let you stay with me.'

Miss Taylor knew that she ought to correct her niece for talking about letting her do anything, but felt it was not the moment, and only said, 'You would not be alone, for Madame Laval, the kind Frenchwoman who has lent you your bed, has offered to take you out shopping with her to buy our dinner'——

She did not get any further, for with a cry of delight Muriel interrupted her: 'Oh, how lovely! That is what I have always longed to do. Oh! please, do let me go with her, she is so nice, and I can understand her a little already, and it will help me with my French nicely.'

'Very well, then; that is madame at the door. I will leave you with her if you promise me not to run away from her.'

Muriel coloured as she said, 'I will never do that again. I am very sorry for having done it, Aunt Lu, really.'

'Yes, dear, I am sure you are. It was a sudden longing to see me, I know that, and I am not angry, only sorry, because it will only have displeased Miss Stephens, and make it harder for you when you go back.'

Muriel sighed, but to the surprise of her aunt she remarked, 'I know that; but father always said one should face the consequences of one's wrong-

doing, and so I am going to write and tell Miss Stephens so.'

'It is time you went to school, you precocious child!' was all Miss Taylor said as she opened the door for Madame Laval, and then went off to her studio, after promising to be back for déjeuner or lunch at twelve o'clock.

'And now, mademoiselle, we will go and buy vegetables and meat for the déjeuner of you and your aunt,' said Madame Laval after she had done the two rooms and folded up the bed so that the appearance of the little sitting-room, which Miss Taylor kept so tidily, was not spoiled for the day; in which work she was helped by Muriel, who methodically folded up her bedclothes as if she had been used to such work all her life, as the Frenchwoman said admiringly.

'I helped to nurse my mother,' said the little girl in the grave tone in which she always spoke of the past.

'Ah yes; and now we will start,' replied Madame Laval, who did not think it good for a child to dwell upon sad subjects. 'No, I do not wear a hat. Why should I? I have still a good covering of hair, and it is not a fête-day, nor am I going into the church, where I need a hat. So I am ready to start if you will come. Here is a small string-bag for you, without which no good housewife ever goes out to shop, and if it does not hold all you need, no matter; my basket is big enough for all our purchases.'

Very proud of her first shopping expedition for

Aunt Lu, Muriel went off, talking in slow copybook phrases to her companion, who for her part was just as proud of her pretty English companion, who was followed by the admiring glances of the market-women, who murmured '*La belle Anglaise*' as she passed.

'What is this market called, Madame Laval?' inquired Muriel as she looked round the quaint, square, covered market, with its rows of stalls with every kind of fruit, vegetable, and meat so tastefully arranged.

'This is the Marché des Carmes—no, it is not held by the Carmes, but it is on the site of their convent, where lived the monks brought here from Mont Carmel by our king St Louis. You will have heard of him?' explained Madame Laval.

'Yes. And what is that statue opposite?' inquired Muriel again, for everything she saw was new and interested her.

'Ah, that is a statue. *Ma foi!* I have never looked at it. I am ashamed. Come, we will just cross the Place Maubert and examine it. Oh! it is to Etienne Dolet, printer and *philosophe*, burned on this place in 1546. It was by Guilbert; he was a great sculptor,' observed madame as they retraced their steps to the *marché*. 'And to think that I have lived here all these years and have never taken the trouble to read that inscription!'

'It is not so very important, and we do the same in London,' said Muriel.

'Ah yes, true, strangers always know more than we natives of our own town,' said madame, 'and no doubt you will know more of Paris than I before you leave.'

Muriel thought this probable, but was too polite to say so.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MURIEL'S FIRST DAY IN PARIS.

IT was a glorious day in May. In the market the stall-holders were chattering, laughing, and selling merrily, throwing in a sprig of seasoning here and an extra potato there to make good weight and please their customers, or deducting a sous because it is *pour vous*, which Muriel thought showed that Madame Laval was particularly favoured, not knowing that it was only the polite custom of the nation; though perhaps the reason of the offerings of fruit Muriel received was her pretty face and black frock.

When they came out of the covered market-place Muriel pointed up the narrow, steep street, and asked, 'Where does that lead to up there?'

'Ah, that leads to many places—the Panthéon for one, where the great men of France are buried. You must go and see that. This morning one must work; but if the aunt allows we will go for a walk there this afternoon, and I will show you the tomb of Victor Hugo. You will have learnt of Victor Hugo?' inquired the woman.

'I know his name, but that is all I know,' said Muriel, who had not learnt about him, and was too truthful to say she had; 'and I am going to learn about him soon.'

'To be sure, mademoiselle will learn all that is necessary to grow up a well-instructed young lady like her aunt; and this morning she will be patient and learn to be a good housewife by helping me with the vegetables for the soup and the lunch—yes?'

'I shall be very glad. Aunt Lu always says when she comes back to England that we do not know how to cook vegetables, so now I shall learn it.' So when they returned to the house, Muriel, to the admiration of the *concierge* and his wife, sat down with a newspaper over her frock, and set to work in a most business-like way to cut up carrots and turnips, and to help madame in the cooking.

So busy was she that the morning passed very quickly, and she was quite surprised when Madame Laval said suddenly, '*Tiens!* it is nearly twelve o'clock. We must mount with the déjeuner, or Miss Taylor will come before it is ready, and that will not do, for she has only a short time to stop for lunch. Come, mademoiselle, if you will be so kind as to carry this pot with the soup I will carry the other utensils for you, and you can perhaps prepare the table for lunch.'

So the two made their way up the many flights of stairs, and the Frenchwoman, having put down her load and warned Muriel not to let them get cold, but to keep them covered up, took her departure to have her own lunch.

When Miss Taylor came in, a few minutes later, the table was laid, and a beaming face met her, as

Muriel cried almost before her aunt was in the room, 'It is all ready, so sit down and eat, for you have not too much time, I know.'

Miss Taylor laughed. 'This is luxury, Muriel. I do not often have a hot lunch, and never unless I prepare it; but there is no hurry. I am not going to leave you alone again this afternoon,' she said.

'Oh, but I want you to. Madame Laval—isn't that her name?—has promised to take me to see the place where the great men of France are buried. And what did Victor Hugo write, please? Because I am going to see his tomb, so I must know something about him.'

'Madame is going to take you to the Panthéon, is she? That is very good of her. Victor Hugo wrote a great many beautiful poems, one of which I have heard you recite called *La Grand'mère*.'

'Was that by Victor Hugo? Well, Aunt Lu, that is a very pretty poem, I dare say; but I should not have thought writing that would make him a great man. If they call every one who writes a little piece of poetry a great man, that Panthéon must be full of people.'

Miss Taylor laughed. 'So much for laziness! I thought I was going to be let off giving you a lesson on French literature. Victor Hugo wrote many books—*Notre Dame de Paris, Les Misérables*, and many plays which you are too young to have read. If you repeat *La Grand'mère* to madame she will be

much better pleased than if you talk about books you have never read, and which she has never read either.'

'When you get into your teens you are a woman, so I have been a woman two years, and must study all these books,' replied Muriel.

'We shall see,' said Miss Taylor as she rose from the table, and added, 'Well, Muriel, since Madame Laval is so good as to take care of you for to-day, I will go and secure my place at the studio, or perhaps it will be taken, for they do not think I am coming back. Come, I will take you down to madame, so put on your hat and jacket.'

'Aunt Lu, when am I going back to school?' inquired Muriel as they went downstairs together.

'I wish I knew, dear. Miss Stephens says she is writing, so I suppose I shall hear to-morrow,' replied Miss Taylor.

'Aunt Lu,' said Muriel in a shocked voice, as if struck with some disagreeable thought.

'Yes, Muriel?' inquired Miss Taylor, looking down at her niece.

'Oh Aunt Lu, suppose Miss Stephens won't have me back!' she cried in dismay.

'Would you be so very sorry then?' asked her aunt.

Muriel hesitated. 'I should be very sorry to leave this delightful place, and of course I shall never like school; but I should not like to feel I had done wrong and vexed mother,' said the child.

Miss Taylor was struck by the influence the mother's memory had over her niece, and replied, 'That is right, Muriel. I do not think Miss Stephens will refuse to have you back; but I must say I do not understand why she asks me to keep you for the present. If it is more than a few days I must get you some clothes; but I do not suppose it is. However, we shall have a letter to-morrow which will settle the matter.' Then she thanked Madame Laval for her kindness, and, nodding merrily at Muriel, was off, walking swiftly up the Rue de la Montagne in the direction of the famous studio.

'Ah, you see how seriously the aunt studies! So must you study if you would be a great artist,' observed Madame Laval. 'And now we who cannot be great will at least go and see the great temple where they lie.' So saying, she put on her hat to do honour to Muriel, and set off up the steep street till at the top they came upon the old Church of St Etienne du Mont, when she was surprised at an exclamation of delight from Muriel.

'Why, I have seen this before; it is a picture that my aunt painted for me, just that little bit of a house all mixed up with the church, with that little window and all!'

It was indeed the corner of the old church beloved of artists that Muriel was looking at, and madame recollected having seen the same little sketch in Miss Taylor's room, and thinking how well it had been done; so the two talked away about art and all sorts

of things, and madame led the way into the Panthéon, which she entered with reverence.

'Is it a church?' inquired Muriel, for it looked very like one, and Madame Laval had put on a hat, she noticed, and spoke low.

'No, not now; it used to be. See all the pictures of St Geneviève; it was dedicated to her. Yes, these pictures are very fine no doubt; but I do not know much about art, and there are all the tombs to see yet, and you will, I have no doubt, know the names of them all,' replied Madame Laval, leading the way to the entrance of the vaults and following the custodian down the steps, as he showed them the tombs of Victor Hugo—whom Madame Laval seemed to be specially interested in, because, as she explained, her husband had a book by him which he liked very much—and then of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Soufflot. 'Ah, poor man, he died of a broken heart because this Panthéon began to crack, and the people said such unkind things about him; and now here he is buried in his own beautiful building,' the guide told them. Then they visited the latest tomb, that of Zola, and Muriel wondered how many of these names she should remember, and was glad to get into the fresh air, for she was tired, and besides it was not the happy visit she had expected. The trials which had seemed so unbearable at the time, looked back upon seemed rather childish, and Muriel was ashamed of herself, and this was not a pleasant feeling for the self-sufficient young lady.

The walk was prolonged to the gardens of the Luxembourg, where madame told Muriel she often came with her sewing, and sat under the trees when it grew warmer. 'And I will bring you here if you stay,' she added.

'Ah, but I am not going to stay,' said Muriel with a sigh. 'I am going back to school. I must learn lessons, you know.'

'To be sure! But you could learn them in Paris; we have schools here too, I can assure you,' replied Madame Laval.

Then Muriel explained how her aunt Lu had no time to take her to school and back, and did not think it would be a good training for her. 'You see, I want discipline,' she explained with a laugh, for Muriel was frankness itself, speaking the French words slowly.

Madame laughed at the old-fashioned expression; but she was much interested in what she heard, and when she got home told her husband that she should advise Miss Taylor to keep the little one with her.

'What! you will take it upon you to meddle with what does not concern you at all? And what is more, in such a case as this I will beg of you to do no such thing,' protested her husband.

'*Comment* in such a thing as this? It is very simple. The best place for the child is with the aunt who loves her, and will care for her, not with the severe instructrice who does not love her, and who

looks after her so ill that she can run away all the way to Paris.'

'A very bad deed,' observed the *concierge*, 'and one not to be encouraged. Mademoiselle is quite right to send her back to school. What could she do here? I do not say that she is not very attractive when she sits and talks as she did this morning; but our kitchen is not the place for her, nor is the *appartement* upstairs, all alone.'

'She could go to school,' suggested his wife.

'Which is what she will do in England. I do not approve of a student's life for a young lady; and though Miss Taylor is an exception, and goes to her church on Sundays, and is altogether a well-conducted demoiselle, still, it is no life to which to introduce a pretty little girl. No; let her go back to England,' he repeated.

'Not if I can say anything to prevent it. I have not enjoyed a walk so much for a very long time as I have this afternoon, and she taught me much, the *petite*. I should be charmed if she were to stay here,' persisted Madame Laval obstinately.

The *concierge* said no more. When his wife took an idea into her head it was useless to argue with her, so he wisely went on with his lunch.

Muriel said good-bye to Madame Laval and ran up the steep stairs without noticing their number, and her face was glowing when she came into her aunt's sitting-room and began to pour forth the story of her doings that afternoon. 'Oh Aunt Lu! I've seen

Molière, and Voltaire, who, madame says, was a bad man, she thinks—at least their tombs, I mean—and I repeated the poetry to her when we stood by Victor Hugo's grave; and while we were standing there a little girl looked at me as she went away; and, fancy, it was his granddaughter, who had come to lay a bunch of flowers on her grandfather's grave, and she heard me say that verse:

Dieu! que tes bras sont froids! rouvre les yeux. Naguère
Tu nous parlais d'un monde où nous mènent nos pas,
Et de ciel, et de tombe, et de vie éphémère,
Tu parlais de la mort; dis-nous, ô notre mère!
Qu'est-ce donc que la mort? Tu ne nous réponds pas!

I couldn't remember any more, and Madame Laval was so pleased! Wasn't it funny that I was just saying that as the little granddaughter was there? Madame said it was quite a romance, and she has enjoyed her walk ever so much with me, and so have I with her.'

All this and more Muriel poured forth into the sympathetic ears of her young aunt, who was pleased that the girl had enjoyed herself, and felt a pang at the thought that she would soon have to send her back to uncongenial surroundings. But she must do this, she was quite decided, as much for the principle of the thing—for it would not do to encourage such a wrong act as running away from school—as for the good of the child, who could not, of course, be left to the care of the good wife of the *concierge* all day long.

'I am glad you have had such a happy afternoon. We will take a walk through another part of Paris, so that you may see a little more of the city before you go back to England,' said Miss Taylor purposely.

Muriel's face clouded over, and her aunt was almost sorry she had spoken of the return at that moment; but it would never do to let the child set her heart upon remaining with her aunt, so she took no notice of the cloud, and talked on about the afternoon's walk and all that Muriel had seen.

'There 's one thing I am glad I came for, Aunt Lu,' said Muriel, 'and that is the north porch of St Etienne du Mont.'

Miss Taylor looked pleased. 'Fancy your noticing that!' she exclaimed. 'It is very picturesque; but, though you have something of the artist in you, you are rather young to have picked that little bit of old Paris out by yourself; or perhaps madame told you, though I should not have thought it would appeal to her.'

'Why, Aunt Lu, have you forgotten? You sent it to me in a picture on my birthday!' cried Muriel. 'And I did not think it very pretty—at least, I liked some of your peasants better till I saw the real place to-day; and now, when I go back, I shall put it up in my room, if Miss Stephens will allow me, and it will remind me of this place.'

'That will be a good idea, and I will send you the next sketch I take. Where would you like it to be taken from, Muriel?' inquired her aunt.

Muriel considered. 'I should like this street, please, because it will be like home to me now,' she replied.

Again Miss Taylor felt a pang, but this time she was determined not to be weak, and only agreed to make a sketch of the quaint old street for her niece as soon as she had time.

Muriel's letter to Miss Stephens had been written and despatched, and Miss Taylor could not help thinking that if the former had any heart it must be touched by the simple little apology from the penitent runaway, who only said to excuse herself that she was 'so very lonely,' but that she would be very good when she came back to make up for her wrong-doing.

Another letter, telling of Muriel's escapade, was also despatched to Dr Taylor, to meet him at the first port, at which he was to stay some weeks.

On her way upstairs Muriel met a bright-faced French girl of about twenty, who looked at her curiously for a moment, and then, smiling, said '*Bon jour*' as she ran lightly down the stairs.

'Who is that, madame? She spoke to me as if she knew me,' said Muriel, looking down after the girl who had smiled at her so pleasantly.

'It is a demoiselle who lives in the house, and she said good-morning in passing. She does not know you, nor need you know her,' said madame, who did not think Miss Taylor would wish her niece to make acquaintance with the young art-student.

But Muriel was much taken with Angelique's merry face, and when she next met the latter she

answered her greeting with a very friendly nod, and the first thing she asked her aunt was who that pretty French lady was.

'I suppose you mean an artist who lives in this house. She is not a friend of mine, Muriel, and you are to speak to no one without my leave,' replied Miss Taylor, who had determined that she would not ask Angelique into her flat until Muriel had left.

But Angelique had also determined that she would make the acquaintance of the little English girl. 'I will paint her as "Childhood." It is true she is not a child; but it is the face I want, and I shall not find such another innocent face as hers in the streets.'

So, not ten minutes after Lu Taylor had given her niece orders not to speak to Mademoiselle de Ségur, that young lady knocked at the door.

'Come in,' said Miss Taylor, unsuspiciously imagining it was Madame Laval.

'*Bon soir*, mesdemoiselles. I have brought you a letter which I saw lying on the *concierge's* table, where it would have remained some time, which is so annoying,' she said, nodding pleasantly at Muriel.

'Oh, thank you! It is from papa,' cried Muriel. 'Do sit down, please.'

Miss Taylor felt very angry with Angelique for coming, and with Muriel for taking upon herself to invite Angelique to be seated, which of course it was not her business to do; but she was too polite to say anything.

Angelique knew perfectly well that she was not

welcome. 'They do not approve of me, the aunt and Madame Laval, because I laugh and make comic pictures instead of being grave and "proper" like themselves. No matter, I will just walk in and make the acquaintance of that pretty child in spite of them. Miss Taylor will be far too "proper" to turn me out.' In which surmise Angelique was quite right; Miss Taylor did not turn her out, but sat there looking as stiff as she could, and that was very stiff indeed. However, the French girl pretended that she did not notice any unfriendliness in her hostess, and talked merrily to Muriel, who laughed heartily for the first time since she had lost her mother.

'Ah, you have been to see the tombs of our great men of to-day! If you come next year you may find another set. They have a way of putting them in one day and digging them out the next —our rulers, you know; so I mean to leave a will to say that I decline the honour, much though I know my countrymen will wish to inter me in the Panthéon.'

It was all nonsense, and there was not much wit in it; but the air with which Angelique said it was so *drôle* that Muriel laughed again, till Angelique got up to go, saying as she went out of the room that she must go and finish a sketch of a practical joke.

'A sketch of a practical joke!' cried Muriel. 'What can that be like? I should like to see it.'

This was just what Angelique expected and wanted; and there was a mischievous twinkle in her

eyes as she answered, nodding good-bye, 'So you shall some day.'

Miss Taylor said nothing, either in reply to that remark or to Muriel's raptures over Angelique.

'Isn't she lovely, Aunt Lu, and so amusing?' she cried.

'She is very amusing, but I do not call her lovely, though she has not bad features. But now it is time for you to go to bed,' replied Miss Taylor, who privately determined that Muriel should not see any more of Angelique, though she was too wise to say so at that moment.

But Miss Taylor counted without Mademoiselle de Ségur, who was equally determined to see more of Muriel, to whom she on her side had taken a fancy, and l'Ange de l'Atelier sang snatches of unangelic songs all the evening, so satisfied was she with her visit.

Miss Taylor's brows knit as she heard the gay students' song, which might be very harmless for young men but was not pretty from a young girl, and again she said to herself that she was sorry she had ever spoken to Angelique—though how she could have avoided this is not very clear—and still more sorry that Angelique should be living in the same house as herself.

## CHAPTER VII.

### 'LES MESDAMES' TO THE RESCUE.

THERE is a post on Sunday morning in Paris, and it brought the expected letter from Miss Stephens, but not the kind of letter that Miss Taylor had rather dreaded to receive. Instead, Miss Stephens told her of the illness with fever of the girl in the same room as Muriel, and begged her aunt to keep a lookout for any signs of the same malady. She mentioned that another case had broken out in another room, and that if there were any more cases the school would have to be closed; but that, at any rate, Muriel must remain in quarantine for at least a fortnight, the doctor said, like the other two girls in the two affected rooms, even if she had not the fever, which, however, Miss Stephens feared was very unlikely, 'as Muriel had looked poorly for some days past, and indeed no doubt it was her state of health which caused her to act as she did, and made it more excusable.' So full was Miss Stephens of the disaster which threatened her of having to close her school that she had no time to think of Muriel's escapade, especially as it had turned out just as well from Miss Stephens' point of view. For if Muriel was to be ill, it was better, being the child she was, that she should be with her aunt; and if she was not to be ill, at any

rate she was better there than in quarantine at school, where she would be pining for her home and home-circle.

Miss Taylor glanced anxiously at her niece when she read of the fever to see if there was any sign of an eruption; but Muriel's complexion was as clear as ever, and only rosy with health, so she breathed again, and then she began to wonder whether she ought not to warn Madame Laval. And as the good woman came up at the moment to 'grease the room,' as Muriel called the process of waxing and polishing that it underwent at madame's hands—or rather feet, to be correct—Miss Taylor asked her at once what she ought to do.

'The *fièvre!* That is serious; but I do not think there is any danger; the *petite* looks the picture of health. Still, of course, one never knows, though a fortnight is a long time of probation.—You have never had it, I suppose, *petite?*' she inquired of Muriel.

'Oh yes, I have!—Aunt Lu, don't you remember mamma telling you we thought at first it was measles?' cried Muriel.

'Then that is all right, and we need have no fear. And so the little lady is to stay here? So much the better; it would be a great pity to send her away just when she is making such progress with her French,' said Madame Laval, looking pleased.

But Miss Taylor's brows were knitted as she replied, 'It is only for a fortnight, and I do not see how she

is going to make progress with her French, for you are too busy'——

'Mademoiselle, my husband says I am not wise to advise you, but I think I know best. Now, why not send her to the school held by former Sisters, now ladies of the world? It is not far along the Boulevard St Germain; and as for getting her there and back, why, I pass it to go to my baker, and it is but a few minutes, and I shall be only too glad to do so, for, as you know, I love young people, and I have no children of my own. And as far as education goes, they are not to be excelled, and the fees are very modest,' said the Frenchwoman so fluently that it was evident that the whole argument had been thought out.

Miss Taylor stood still and listened, and suddenly she felt a small hand slipped into hers, as a gentle voice said, 'Oh, do—do, Aunt Lu!'

'But'—— she began, hesitating, for the idea was so new to her that it required consideration.

'You can go yourself when you like and see the Madames, for so they are called now. I spoke to them this morning,' continued madame, and then paused, rather frightened at her audacity.

Miss Taylor did not know whether to be grateful or annoyed at the way the wife of the *concierge* had taken it upon herself to arrange her affairs, or rather Muriel's, for her; but she considered that on the whole she had not been very successful in these same arrangements, and that it was not a bad idea, so she replied with a laugh, 'And, pray, what have you said,

madame? You did not know then how long she was going to stay.'

'I only spoke of the young demoiselle, and how I wished that she could go to school with them even if for a week or two to be occupied, and explained who you were, and all about you. Ah yes, I gave you a high testimonial, I can assure you of that; and the good Madames know me, and know that I speak the truth, so you will be well received if you go to see them.'

Louise Taylor was not quite sure that she liked being taken on the recommendation of her *concierge's* wife; and, though she thanked her, it was a little stiffly. Then she said to Muriel, to cut the conversation short, 'Come, Muriel, we shall be late for church if we do not hurry.'

'*Ah, bon jour*, mesdemoiselles. Yes, you will be well received, for I also will say a word for you, and explain how proper you are, and different from me,' said a mocking voice behind them; and there at the door, listening apparently to their private conversation, was Mademoiselle Angelique, dressed for going out.

Muriel turned, and cried with delight, 'Oh, *bon jour*, mademoiselle! Fancy, I am not going back for at least a fortnight! Isn't it lovely?'

'Yes, very lovely; and you will like the Madames very much if you go to them, they are so kind and clever,' replied Angelique quite soberly for her; but she did not add the fact that she had been educated

there herself, for she shrewdly suspected that it would only prejudice Miss Taylor against the school. Besides, she had her own reasons for not mentioning the fact.

'And you are going out too? Perhaps you are going our way? Where is your church?' inquired Muriel innocently, it never occurring to her that one could be going anywhere else than to church on Sunday morning.

Angelique had the grace to look a little abashed, for she was off for a day's amusement with companions as thoughtless as herself, and had not any intention of going to church. However, she recovered herself before Muriel noticed anything, and replied quickly, 'My church is quite near here. We can go as far as that together.'

Miss Taylor said nothing, and Angelique went with the aunt and niece as far as the nearest church, into which Angelique entered, nodding and smiling good-bye.

'I shall be too late for the excursion,' she muttered to herself as she went into the church, but she did not come out until the end of the service, as she might have done; and the result was that, for the first time to Madame Laval's knowledge since she had been in her house, Angelique de Ségur spent her Sunday quietly at home instead of 'rampaging the country and coming back at a late hour,' as the wife of the *concierge* said with disapproval.

It was a little dull that afternoon without her

companions; but somehow Angelique did not regret her sudden impulse to go to church rather than shock the little English girl; and though the only walk she had was to see the poor woman down the street, whose room she tidied and 'brightened up' with some flowers, Angelique went to bed in a happier frame of mind than she often did on Sunday evenings, and what is more, kept up this new practice, to Madame Laval's great delight.

Leaving Angelique at her church, the two Taylors walked across the bridge over the Seine to the Embassy Church.

Muriel was very much interested in all she saw around her. The babies especially interested her. 'I can't think how they grow, Aunt Lu, all wrapped up so tightly and stiffly; and it must be so hot and uncomfortable. Our little babies can move about and kick as much as they like.'

'They seem to grow, all the same, Muriel,' responded her aunt in an absent-minded tone; for the truth was she was thinking over Madame Laval's proposition, and trying to make up her mind as to whether she would take madame's advice or not. She was half-inclined to agree with the *concierge* that it was none of her business; but wiser thoughts prevailed, and she considered that after all she was very fortunate to have a kindly, motherly woman to give her advice, for she was only twenty-one, and she decided to go to the school kept by the Madames the very next day.

That afternoon, according to her promise, she went for a walk in another part of Paris, to the beautiful wooded park called the Bois de Boulogne.

Muriel was a very good walker, and the two walked along the Seine and to the Bois, where Muriel cried to her aunt, 'Aunt Lu, there she is again!'

'Who, and where, Muriel?' inquired Miss Taylor, who had noticed that the girl was constantly looking round at something. 'You must not turn round and stare at people. It is not polite.'

'But it is only a girl, Aunt Lu; and she has been staring at me too,' objected Muriel.

'Of course people look at you, because you are a foreigner,' explained her aunt; 'and I dare say she is not the only French girl who has looked at you. Why do you notice her more than the others?'

'I have not noticed anybody looking at me particularly,' said Muriel, to her aunt's secret relief, for she feared that the girl would hear the compliments that were constantly passed upon her fair skin and pretty, curling golden hair; but, to do her justice, her beauty was the one thing she was not in the least proud of.

'But this girl passed us when we were just leaving home'—Muriel already called the little flat home. 'She was walking then, and she looked at me when we came out of our house, and now she has just got out of that carriage, and is saying something about me, I am sure.'

'Never mind, Muriel. Do not look at her any

more, or she will think you very rude, and say it is English manners,' returned her aunt.

'I am sure she would not say anything unkind, for she has just smiled at me, Aunt Lu. And, oh, I do wish we knew her! She does look so nice!' cried Muriel.

'I thought you did not like girls,' said Miss Taylor in surprise.

'This girl is different. I am sure I should like her,' declared Muriel.

'I am afraid you will never know her, so I should try to make up my mind to like the girls at this new school instead.'

'Oh, then, I am really going there?' cried Muriel, her thoughts turned effectually from her new acquaintance.

'I think so, if the Madames will have you. We shall see; I will go and see them to-morrow,' announced her aunt.

'There, Aunt Lu, I am sure she would like to know me. She has smiled again and said something to her mother,' suddenly exclaimed Muriel.

'Who? Oh, it is that girl again,' said Miss Taylor. 'Well, I am sorry to disappoint you, Muriel; but I could not possibly make acquaintances in the streets like that, and I do not think, if she is a nicely-brought-up girl, she will wish to do so either; and, at any rate, her mother will not allow it, I am sure. So, please, do not look at her any more, but walk properly beside me. What a child you are in some things, to be sure!'

Muriel obediently turned away her head after giving a parting nod, to which the other replied by a very vigorous one, and the exchange of signs of recognition ended there; though twice in the evening Muriel recurred to the matter, and hoped she should see her again.

'That is very unlikely. Paris is very big, Muriel,' said Miss Taylor.

'But she lives quite near; at least, I think she does, for we saw her near here,' Muriel persisted.

'Dear, dear, Muriel, what an uncomfortable girl you are, always setting your heart upon impossible things!' remarked Miss Taylor.

'Sometimes the impossible things come to pass,' said Muriel shrewdly.

Whereupon Miss Taylor replied severely, 'Yes, if you mean your coming to live with me—for the present at least; but you did not get that to pass quite fairly, did you? And you will not try to get to know this French girl without my leave, will you?'

'Oh no, Aunt Lu, not even if she speaks to me. I will say I am very sorry, but my aunt does not let me speak to girls who have not been properly introduced.'

Miss Taylor laughed. 'I hope you will not have to say any such rude thing; but I do not think it is likely, for she looked a very nice girl, and if so she will not speak to you at all.'

Then the subject was dropped, and the next morning, instead of going off to the studio as usual, Miss Taylor

took Muriel with her, and turned her steps towards the big school kept by the Madames of whom Madame Laval had spoken, and who were known everywhere as 'Les Mesdames.'

It was not yet the hour for the opening of the classes, but there were several girls going up the wide steps under the care of their mothers or more often their *bonnes;* and what was Muriel's delight and surprise to see her acquaintance of the day before coming towards the school from the opposite direction!

She gave a little cry of joy; hearing which, the girl, encouraged, left her *bonne* behind, and, hurrying, came up to Muriel and said in English with a very French accent, 'You are Muriel, the new little English girl who is coming to school here, are you not?'

It is doubtful who was the more surprised of the two—Muriel or her aunt; but it was the latter who recovered herself first, and asked in grave, surprised accents, 'How do you know the name of my niece, please? And who told you that she was coming to school here?'

'Oh, please, mademoiselle, do not be vexed with me. We heard—mamma and I—outside the church yesterday, Madame Laval speaking of the beautiful young English girl who was perhaps coming to school here; and when I saw you both yesterday in the Bois I said to mamma that I was sure it was you; but she said "Nonsense," and that it was very unlikely, and that I was not to stare and smile so much, or you would think me rude; but you see I was right.'

'And my aunt said I was rude too. Oh, I am so glad it is you!' cried Muriel. 'I did so want to know you.'

Miss Taylor was quite surprised at Muriel's warmth of manner, for she was not noted for making friends with strangers; but this was evidently a case of love at first sight. However, she did not wish Muriel to be too hasty in her friendship, especially as nothing was settled, and looked warningly at her niece.

Moreover, though Miss Taylor was too proud to say so to Madame Laval, she was not sure whether she should be able to afford the fees. She little knew that madame had guessed this, and had told the Madames the industrious, economical life her *locataire* led before her niece came to live with her, and her fear that it would be still more difficult for her to make both ends meet now.

So when Miss Taylor had told the new friend that nothing was settled yet, and said good-bye to her, she went into the Superior's room not a little troubled. But the sweet-faced directrice soon put her at her ease. She told Miss Taylor that the fees were very low, and mentioned a sum which seemed absurdly small, but which the directrice assured her was quite sufficient.

Miss Taylor, very much relieved, agreed to pay the small fee required; and when the directrice asked that the child might remain, she was only too glad and relieved to find how easily everything had been arranged, and that the gentle, kindly Frenchwoman

was not shocked at Muriel's way of leaving her last school.

So she said good-bye to Muriel, who parted from her most cheerfully, especially as the directrice rang the bell and sent for Marthe Ballanfah to come and take care of the new English girl. And Marthe Ballanfah turned out, of course, to be her friend of the Bois.

'So you see we are to be friends after all,' said Marthe.

'If you don't mind having a friend so small as me,' said Muriel, looking to the French girl, who was a head and shoulders taller.

'I do not mind at all. I suppose you are not so much younger. I am fourteen, and you are twelve, are you not?'

'Oh no, I am fourteen too, but I am very small for my age. Does that matter?' asked Muriel anxiously.

The French girl laughed as she threw her arms round Muriel and kissed her. 'Not a bit. Now, come along, and I will introduce you to the teachers and your other schoolfellows.' So saying, she opened the door of a large room full of girls all talking together, and ushered Muriel into her new school.

And so Muriel made her second attempt at school-life.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUBJECTS TO BE AVOIDED.

MORE than a week had gone since Muriel's unexpected appearance at her aunt's little flat, and she was sitting in the studio, as she persisted in calling their little sitting-room and studio, which now served for her bedroom too. In her hands was a letter which she was re-reading, and which seemed to interest her very much, and she held it up to her aunt the moment the latter came in. 'Look, Aunt Lu, such a kind letter from Miss Stephens! Just see what she says,' the girl cried.

Miss Taylor took the letter, and read that Miss Stephens 'freely forgave' Muriel, adding the following information and a piece of advice: 'If you had stayed I should probably have taken you over to your aunt myself, since all the pupils have been sent home; so that if you had waited you would have come comfortably with me, and have escaped much of the trouble and fright you gave yourself, your aunt, and me. You see it is not always well to take the law into our own hands and run away from trouble.'

'Let us hope it will be a lesson to you,' said Miss Taylor; and then, thinking the girl had heard enough about her naughtiness, which Miss Stephens in a letter to the elder girl had said had better be forgotten,

she asked, 'How did you come home to-day? I hear Madame Laval has gone out for the afternoon. If I had known I would have come and fetched you myself. You must not come home alone, you know.'

'Marthe and her maid brought me home, and they say if you will allow them they will conduct me every day; and I said I was sure that you would be very glad, and so Marthe is coming to ask you to-morrow. But, Aunt Lu, why can't we be English, and do as they do in England? Why shouldn't I go out alone? And, please, may she come and have tea with us?' continued Muriel.

'No, no,' replied Miss Taylor, who was not so independent as Muriel, 'you must not walk out alone; 'let Marthe fetch you.' Miss Taylor looked hastily round the sparely furnished room and hesitated about granting the second request.

Then Muriel put in hastily, 'She does so want to come, and I said I would show her the lovely balcony where we have tea and see the sunset.'

'Very well,' said Miss Taylor, who had conquered any little pride she had felt. 'We will have tea on the balcony; it is quite warm enough, and the view from there is wide enough to make up for the want of room inside.'

The view from this little balcony had been the inducement to the young artist to take the rooms; and indeed it was very beautiful, looking out as one did over the market below to Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité, and beyond to Montmartre, with

its white-domed church standing on the northern heights of Paris.

'The only objection to asking Marthe to tea is that I do not think she will like it,' observed Miss Taylor next afternoon, as Muriel was making grand preparations for her tea-party, and putting out the cups and saucers.

'Not like tea!' cried Muriel, in her surprise stopping her occupation. 'Did she tell you that she did not?'

'Did she tell you that she did?' retorted Miss Taylor. 'Because, if she did, then it is all right; but French girls as a rule do not drink tea. However, we shall see; and, at any rate, you can get some French cakes, which she is sure to like.'

'But, Aunt Lu, I want to get some English cake; she is sure to like that, and she told me she had never tasted our plum-cake,' objected Muriel.

'Very well, do as you like,' said her aunt; and, the tea-table being arranged and ready to take out to the balcony as soon as Marthe came, Muriel went out with her friend Madame Laval to get the cake, and soon after Marthe arrived, accompanied by her maid.

The three took seats out to the balcony, the view from which was rapturously admired by Marthe, and the tea-party began.

Marthe duly took a cup and looked comically at Miss Taylor.

'If you do not like it, you must not try to drink it,' expostulated the latter.

'It is not that, mademoiselle; only I do not see how I am to balance it in one hand and eat as well,' said the French girl.

'Put it down on the table,' suggested Miss Taylor.

'But I wish to do it like an English girl; it is so, is it not?' said Marthe, holding the cup gingerly, with the little finger stuck stiffly out.

Muriel watched gravely. 'Why do you stick out your finger?' she inquired.

'It is so in all the books I have read—yes, I assure you so.' But here Marthe put down her cup rather hastily; she had taken a long drink, and evidently she had never tasted tea before, and to judge by her face did not wish to taste it again.

'No, no,' she protested, 'I will learn to drink it; it is only the first step which costs. Perhaps it was a little strong. If I may have some water?'

So Miss Taylor made a very weak and sweet mixture, which suited Marthe better, and she declared herself delighted with the cake.

'I have often heard of your plum-pudding, and I am very glad to eat it,' she observed. 'It is very good—a little indigestible perhaps; but no matter, it is all education, mamma says.'

Muriel's face of astonishment at her cake being taken for plum-pudding was funny to see; but she joined the other two in the laugh that followed, as she remarked, 'Aunt Lu was quite right, and next time you come we will have a French tea.'

'Which will not be tea at all then. But tell me,

Muriel, have you learnt that difficult lesson you were sighing over to-day?' inquired the French girl.

Muriel shook her head. 'I shall never remember it. It is history, and it is dreadfully difficult—not a bit like English history.'

'How? Why is it not like English history? You will find English people and English history mixed up with it,' protested Marthe.

'Our kings go straight on; we don't skip about from one number to another as you do from XVI. to XVIII. How can I learn that? It is hard enough when they all will take the same name and call themselves Louis; but if they take what number they like'—— objected Muriel.

But Marthe listened to her with open mouth. 'I do not understand—you speak too fast; but our kings did not choose their number. The first Louis was Louis I., and so on. You may believe me it is so.'

'I believe I know what Muriel means. It was Louis XVIII. you were learning about, wasn't it?' inquired Miss Taylor, watching the two girls, the one so different from the other, and yet the two such good friends.

For answer, Muriel fetched the French history book and showed the place. 'There is Louis XVI., and'—turning some pages—'here is Louis XVIII. But where is Louis XVII.? He is not mentioned, for I looked down the pages, though of course I could not read it all, and there is no Louis XVII. mentioned there at all!'

Marthe nodded several times during this explanation. 'Yes, yes, I see; but did you not notice that the Revolution came between?'

'But the Revolution was not Louis XVII.! Where is he?'

'Ah, poor child, he is dead now; but he was in prison in the Temple, where they say he was tormented to death. I do not know if it be true, for some say that he escaped; but if so, no one knows where he went. For myself, I believe that he is the little boy we see in the waxwork museum, in a cell in the prison. They call him the dauphin; but of course he was the king as soon as his father was guillotined. To tell the truth, I do not care to dwell upon this tale, for it is too horrible to read of the terrible life they led him. They wanted him to die, but it would have been better to have guillotined him quickly than to have kept a little boy like him in solitary confinement.'

'Why didn't they?' inquired Muriel. 'They don't seem to have minded whom they guillotined.'

Miss Taylor looked at Muriel with a warning glance, for she feared that such frank criticism of her country's deeds might make Marthe angry; but the latter answered, with a shrug of her shoulders, 'Who knows? Perhaps they did not like to guillotine a child of five. It would have been too much.'

'Yes; I think Europe would have been roused by that,' agreed Muriel.

And then Miss Taylor interrupted the discussion;

for, however much one may criticise one's own country, one never likes foreigners to join in the criticisms, so she asked whether this tableau was in the Musée Grevin.

'Yes; in wax, very lifelike,' replied Marthe.

'Is it a place like Madame Tussaud's?' inquired Muriel.

'Yes; and if you saw the pictures of the poor little king, with only a rat for companion, you would never forget your history.—Perhaps, mademoiselle, you will permit Muriel to come with us?'

Miss Taylor could not resist Muriel's pleading face. 'Very well,' she agreed; 'and as it happens, I am going to take a sketch of the Place du Temple—that was the prison where he was imprisoned with his family—the king Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, and his sister and aunt—so if Marthe likes to come we might take a walk there.'

The next half-holiday Marthe and her mother fetched Muriel, and they went off to the Musée Grevin, and there Marthe, in spite of previous announcements that it was too horrible, told her companion the story of the poor little son of Louis XVI. whom history calls Louis XVII., and showed him in his gloomy cell with the wretched jailers watching him through the bars.

'And here is Marie Antoinette in her cell in the Conciergerie, never quite alone; for look at those two dreadful men drinking just behind the screen, and see how pale and sad she is—that is, after the

king had been killed. Here is all the family together in prison in the Temple. Now you will never forget that bit of history, will you?'

'No,' said Muriel. 'I have read a book about Marie Antoinette. She was very pretty, and in the book she was very gay at first, but she does not look as if she could ever have been gay.'

Marthe nodded in the quick way she had. 'No wonder, after such a terrible time, with her friends being killed all round her; but if you come one day to Versailles you will see the pretty cottage she was so happy in.'

'Now you will see some scenes in French history which you will never forget. It is the period of your next lesson. See here are Danton, Desmoulins, and Robespierre,' said Madame Ballanfah.

Muriel gave an exclamation at the last name. 'That little, mild-looking man the dreadful tyrant! Was he really like that?' she inquired.

Marthe nodded. 'Perhaps the wax makes him look better than he really was; but if you look close you will see that he has a cruel mouth. But here is the trial of Madame Roland. See how noble she looks! And if you are not afraid to look at horrors, here is Charlotte Corday after she stabbed Marat,' she said, rattling on, and giving scraps of information to help Muriel with her French history, as she told her.

Muriel looked at the beautiful face of the misguided young girl, and said, 'Marthe, it just shows how

people can make mistakes. She looks far too good to murder anybody.'

'It was a dreadful time; that is the only excuse. But never mind; let us pass on to something more cheerful. Here is the Court of the greatest man the world has ever seen,' she cried enthusiastically, as she showed a room with a group of figures, including Napoleon and Josephine, with their Court, at La Malmaison.

'It is very pretty, and the dresses are very becoming,' was all Muriel would say, in spite of the questioning eyes of her friend.

'I see you do not like Napoleon,' said Marthe, 'and I adore him, and Josephine too; and I have at home a little plant from the park of La Malmaison.'

'How can you like Napoleon and Josephine too? You know he behaved very badly to her,' objected Muriel.

Marthe made a little gesture. 'He was obliged. He sacrificed her to his country. It was not his fault. Besides, Josephine was not a great or good woman.'

'It was to his ambition that he sacrificed her, which was very wrong,' observed her mother, 'and it was his downfall, as you will see if you can tear yourselves away from this tableau and come to the next room.'

'Do you know, Marthe, I pity Josephine more than Marie Antoinette,' said Muriel. Marthe looked astonished; and Muriel continued, 'Yes, I do, because

Marie Antoinette had had her day of triumph, and it was not her husband's fault that she was put in prison; but Josephine had to live alone, and see him marry some one else who was Empress in her place! It was too cruel, Marthe.'

'I have never thought of it like that; but come and you will see the end of the greatest man the world has ever seen,' she continued, leading the way to another group of waxwork figures. It was Napoleon on his deathbed at St Helena, with Sir Hudson Lowe sitting in grim silence beside him.

'Who are those men? Are they the doctors?' inquired Muriel.

'No; they are the cruel English jailers who broke his heart—his great heart—in his exile, and are gloating over his longed-for death,' she cried.

'Gloating!' echoed Muriel, who did not know the French feeling on the subject.

Marthe started, and it did not need the warning touch of her mother to tell her what she had done. 'Ah, it was long ago; people were more cruel then; and no doubt the English were afraid of him, and the guard was not very kind. We will go on farther; all this is very *triste*.—Mamma, let us go into the theatre to see some funny piece. Muriel is quite grave.'

But Muriel lingered at the bedside of Napoleon, her mind much exercised at the accusation. At last she said, 'Sir Hudson Lowe looks very stern, but I do not think he looks glad or gloating, Marthe. And

I remember that he was always afraid his prisoner would escape.'

Marthe nodded again. 'No doubt. But he had no right to be a prisoner; he took refuge on an English ship, thinking he would be safe, and they kept him. But I forgot; I will say no more.—Never mind, mamma; I am only teaching Muriel her French history. I am sure she will never forget poor little Louis XVII.—Will you, Muriel?'

'No,' said Muriel; 'and I am sorry about Napoleon. But we would not do it now, I am sure.'

Then when she went home she asked her aunt what she thought about it.

Miss Taylor laughed. 'So you have come to international questions? Well, to tell you the truth, I can never excuse the treatment of Napoleon at St Helena, so I never discuss it. It is quite true that we were afraid of him, and that he was rather more harshly treated than he need have been, or so people say; but the French need not talk, seeing the way they treated their king and queen.'

'And that poor little dauphin, Aunt Lu; it made me feel ill to look at him in his prison, poor little boy, and I simply could not bear all the details Marthe would keep telling me.'

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Miss Taylor hastily rose from her seat to answer it. She was afraid it might be Angelique, who had been more 'insupportable' than ever at the studio, and had made such wild jokes that Miss Taylor was

more determined than ever that she should not enter her rooms again, at any rate while Muriel was there.

But it was only Madame Laval, who came in with a distressed countenance. 'What a foolish woman I am! I came to bring you a letter, and, see, I have brought you the wrong one, so I must have left yours on my table in our lodge. Perhaps the *petite* would be so good'—— she added, half-hesitating.

But Muriel answered without waiting for Miss Taylor to speak. 'I will fetch it, madame. I am not a bit tired, and I do not mind the stairs.'

Miss Taylor did not like to object, and there was really no objection, except that Muriel might meet Angelique on the way; but Madame Laval, as if she guessed what was in the young aunt's mind, observed, 'The young artist is out this evening; she has gone to one of those student-concerts, where she wastes her time and money, so I tell her.'

Miss Taylor said nothing, but smiled and nodded when Muriel, turning to her, said as an afterthought, 'I may go, mayn't I, Aunt Lu?'

So down the stairs went Muriel, chattering to Madame Laval all the time, got the letter, and was just coming up with it in her hand when Mademoiselle Angelique came in.

'Ah, you are back very early, mademoiselle! Did you not enjoy yourself?' then inquired Madame Laval, who thought it her privilege to ask such questions of her *locataires*.

'No; I think I must be getting old and serious or

something, for they bored me to-night with the nonsense they sang.—Ah, *petite*, you there?' she added to Muriel.

'Yes,' replied Muriel as she went upstairs with the French girl, while Madame Laval looked after them doubtfully.

'After all, there is no real harm in her, and Miss Taylor is a little too—what shall I say?—severe upon French gaiety,' she observed to her husband.

But the latter shook his head. 'Young demoiselles cannot be too careful. I do not approve of young ladies who never go to church, and only amuse themselves and paint foolish and frightful pictures; it is not *comme il faut*.'

'Well, well, we cannot all be perfect; and it does not do to judge others. There is much good in Mademoiselle Angelique, and Miss Taylor might feel honoured to know her if she were aware'—— Here madame checked herself. 'But she has a foolish way with her, and it makes people shy of her, which makes her worse. I wish Miss Taylor would be a little kind and friendly to her.'

Muriel, at any rate, was not shy of Mademoiselle Angelique, and walked up with her, quite delighted to have met her.

'By the way, you have not seen my "funny sketch" yet. Would you like to come in to-night?' she inquired as they came to her door.

'Oh yes, please,' cried Muriel eagerly, and Angelique led the way into her room.

Muriel gave a little cry of astonishment. It was unlike any room she had ever seen before. A little, whitewashed room, with all sorts of pictures dashed in sepia upon it, and on any bare space and on some spaces which were not bare were studies pinned to the wall. And such pictures and sketches!

'Well, what is the matter? It is not much like Aunt Lu's room, is it?' inquired Angelique, laughing as she swept a pile of papers off the only seat for Muriel to sit upon.

'No; but it is very pretty—that is, some of it,' she remarked in some confusion, for several of the sketches were pretty, but others were just the reverse.

'You do not like Monsieur the Evil One? But one cannot make him pretty, and, as it happens, I was asked to draw him,' observed Angelique, seeing that Muriel's eye rested with a rather shocked expression upon the series of sketches of Mephistopheles, as Angelique had called him.

'Yes, of course,' said Muriel politely. 'I don't know anything about art; but where is the practical joke you were going to show me?'

'There it is, or rather there is the sketch I made for it,' said the French girl, pointing to Monsieur the Evil One, as Madame Laval had called him. It was a sketch, one of a series which Angelique was doing for a very second-rate comic paper, of Mephistopheles amusing himself at the expense of good people, and at it Muriel looked very gravely, and said, 'Thank

you. It is very funny,' as she handed the sketch back.

'You do not like it, nor do I; but if you were offered money for doing it what would you do? For, after all, there is no harm in it.' Then, as Muriel did not answer, but turned the conversation, Angelique persisted in her question.

'I don't know; but mamma used to say one should never make fun of goodness or make badness attractive. Some book she had read did that, and she said it was wrong,' said Muriel, colouring, as she always did when she spoke of her mother.

'Your mother was right, *petite*, and I will tear up the sketches—*voilà!* Now, *bon soir*, for your aunt will be looking for you.'

Muriel ran to her aunt's flat, and told her the story. Miss Taylor was more touched than Muriel, for she knew—what the child did not—that it meant a loss to the French artist which she could not well afford, and she felt ashamed that she had turned her back upon a girl who evidently had so much good in her.

Meanwhile Angelique tore up the sketches as she had promised, and wrote a note declining the commission as 'unworthy of her talented brush,' which made the editor very angry and Angelique very poor for the next week or so.

'Your mother was right, *petite*, and I will tear up the sketches—*voilà!*'

## CHAPTER IX.

### DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

AFTER the tearing up of the offending sketches, Angelique was received with more friendliness by Miss Taylor, and the friendliness lasted until her next folly. However, at present Angelique was admitted to the flat, and took advantage of the fact.

'I can't think what is the matter with Aunt Lu,' said Muriel one evening to Mademoiselle Angelique, in whose room she was sitting; 'she is worrying about something, I am sure, for she did not sleep last night.'

'It is either being in love or debt that robs us of our sleep,' quoted the French girl, who was very well read, and spoke English fairly well when she chose; and she went on with a sketch she was making.

Muriel looked at her, frowning partly because she did not like Angelique to seem to make fun of Aunt Lu, and partly because she wondered whether either of these things was true. 'I don't think Aunt Lu is in love, because she does not care about any one but her painting—and me; and I am sure she would never get into debt, because she is too honourable,' she said at last.

Mademoiselle Angelique laughed. 'Then she must be in love with her art,' she said. Then, seeing

that Muriel was puzzling about the matter, she put down her brush, and, throwing herself into a very graceful attitude, with her hands behind her head, she continued more gravely, 'Perhaps she is afraid of getting into debt, or perhaps she is worrying about you.'

'About me—you mean about my staying in this flat? But I am quite happy,' cried Muriel; 'at least, as happy as I could be anywhere now.'

'Yes; but Aunt Lu would like you to have everything "proper," as you English say, and regular meals, not the kind of picnic-life we artists lead. I think if I were you I would ask her what it is, and see if you cannot persuade her that you do not miss these comforts, or try to help her a little,' suggested Mademoiselle de Ségur, and then broke into a song, and refused to stop to explain what she meant when Muriel asked her.

For some little time Muriel stayed in Angelique's room. The French student had only the one tiny room; but she had so few things in it that it did not matter, the girl always said. But Angelique would not 'talk sense,' and all the answer she would make was to sing a silly song about a poor little street gamin who 'did all the cooking and cleaning and all,' which Muriel had often heard her sing before. So after a time the child went off, and was sent to bed without having any opportunity of talking to her aunt.

Louise Taylor sat in front of her writing-table, her

brows knit, as they always were when she had to think out something which was not easy. Muriel had gone to bed and was asleep; the noise of the carriages far below in the narrow little street did not disturb her, nor did the roar of trams, motors, and the songs or shouts of the students in the Boulevard St Germain prevent her from sleeping soundly, so her aunt thought, and she gave vent to a sigh.

In front of her was a letter, and beside it a bill, and she looked from one to the other in evident perplexity, and then she pushed them away, and, resting her head on her hand, gazed at the table in front of her.

There was nothing but wood to be seen there, plain deal, which she had painted herself with a border of conventional leaves in sepia. But it was not at the border that she was looking when she sighed; or, if she was, she did not see it, nor did she see a golden head raise itself from its pillow and look keenly at her.

Again she sighed impatiently, and this time Muriel could stand it no longer; but, slipping out of bed, she went across the studio, as she insisted on calling the little sitting-room where her bed was put, and coming to her aunt, put her hand on the latter's arm and said, 'What is it, Aunt Lu? Please tell me.'

Miss Taylor started, for she had not heard her niece move. 'I thought you were asleep, Muriel; you ought to be. Do you know that it is midnight?'

'How could I sleep with those people singing like that? I wanted to go to the window to listen, it

sounded so funny; at least they seemed to think it funny, for they all laughed.'

'It only shows that this is not the right place for you. You should not listen to students' songs. I must do something, that is certain,' returned her aunt with decision.

'Oh Aunt Lu, I can go to sleep quite well if I choose; but to-night I was thinking too hard, and that kept me awake, or I should have been asleep long ago. But tell me, what is the matter? Why have you sighed twice like that? It's just because of that that I am awake,' said Muriel.

'I suppose I shall have to tell you, but you need not be too glad. The school is shut up, so you cannot go back there this term, and the question is what to do with you for the next few months, for there are the summer holidays coming at the end of this term, and whatever I do I shall not keep you here.'

'I am not at all glad about the school, because I am sorry for Miss Stephens, who will be dreadfully upset, and for the others too; and I am not glad because of you, because I know you are upset too. Do you know, I am beginning to wonder whether you like me as much as you used to do,' observed Muriel.

Muriel was a most undemonstrative girl, and her aunt was the only person, except her father and mother, to whom she ever showed affection; but this evening the girl seemed so much hurt that Miss Taylor hastened to say, 'I do, indeed I do; but I am so afraid of being selfish. I like having you, or I

should like having you if I had a nice house to have you in; but though this did very well for me, it is not at all the thing for you, and even I only like it as a means to an end.'

'I never heard of such a thing. Why is what is good enough for you not good enough for me? I should have thought you were the more important,' said Muriel.

'It was good enough because it was for only one person, and also because I am an art-student, and they are supposed to live for their art alone. And, besides, I do not know any one, and so nobody has anything to say; but if you are here, your schoolfellows will want to know where you live, and to come perhaps, and I cannot possibly entertain them here; and yet it is not to be expected that you should live the quiet life I have done, without any friends.' And Miss Taylor sighed, and said under her breath, 'Oh dear!'

'Why did you say "Oh dear!" Aunt Lu, and sigh so dreadfully?' demanded Muriel, who determined to take Mademoiselle Angelique's advice, and talk the matter over with her aunt. And as she thought of Mademoiselle Angelique, the words of the song came into her head too, and a sudden idea struck her, so she repeated her question, 'Tell me, Aunt Lu dear, why did you sigh like that?'

Miss Taylor was taken aback, and not a little annoyed. 'I did not intend you to hear me,' she said. 'You ought to be asleep. Go back to bed, Muriel.'

'I will, if you will talk to me there,' replied

Muriel; 'but I can't go to sleep when I know you are sitting up worrying. Please tell me what is the matter.'

'You are the matter!' retorted her aunt. 'I don't know what I ought to do with you.'

'I can easily tell you. Keep me with you. Why do you keep saying this is not the place for me? I think it is a very nice place, and I am quite happy here,' declared Muriel.

Miss Taylor hesitated for a moment, and then said, 'The fact is, Muriel, I find I cannot be at home even as much as I am now if I am to go on with my painting. The master does not like my keeping such short hours, and so I must either go off at nine and not be back till five or six, or else give up the painting; in which case I think I had better take you back to England and live near a good school'——

'No, no, you must not do that, Aunt Lu! What does it matter if you do not come back to lunch? I will stay at school, and I shall only be at home an hour before you in the evenings, and I shall not be dull looking out on the balcony; it is so amusing to watch the people and things.'

But Miss Taylor's brow did not clear. 'Even if we arrange that,' she said, 'it is not the greatest difficulty.'

'What is, then?' inquired Muriel.

'The dinners,' observed her aunt. 'Who is to buy them, and who is to cook them when they are bought?'

'Me,' said Muriel promptly, regardless of grammar, in a confident tone.

'You!' said her aunt. 'Don't talk nonsense. Of course, Madame Laval would do both; but I do not care to take such service from her without paying, and'——

'We can't afford it,' said Muriel in her blunt fashion. 'But you need not laugh, Aunt Lu; I can do a little cooking, and I can easily go to the market just across this tiny street, and buy the dinner, and you will see how well I shall manage, and how little I shall spend. Mamma used to say that I was more economical than Mary' (this was the maid).

Miss Taylor shook her head. 'You do not know enough French, and would not know the weights and measures, for one thing; and I am afraid we should both get ill if we had to live on your preparations, Muriel, thank you all the same for the offer.'

'But won't you let me try one day, Aunt Lu? That can't do any harm to either of us. Just give me as much as you can afford to spend on a dinner, and I will go across and buy as much as I can, and bring it back and cook it on the little stove. Do let me. I promise not to ask to try again.'

But Miss Taylor had no faith whatever in her niece's culinary talents. 'No, Muriel, not to-morrow; but I will take part of your advice. I will make arrangements for you to stay at school for midday dinner, and in the evening we will have some cold meat, and you may buy that if you like, and we shall

see what can be done. Perhaps we can sometimes dine at a restaurant when we get tired of cold dinners; and I must paint some little pictures'——

'Oh no, don't do that, Aunt Lu; you must not paint pot-boilers!' cried Muriel, who had heard her aunt call pictures that she painted in order to earn money quickly by this name, and knew that she did not like to paint them. 'You must study,' she said in a superior tone; 'but don't worry, Aunt Lu; I am sure it will be all right. Why do you keep sighing? I am sure it is not because of the cold dinners. There is something else, and you had better tell me, because I shall keep asking you and trying to find out till you will tell me because you are tired of refusing.'

Miss Taylor laughed, although she was not in a laughing mood. 'I can't make you understand that I dislike the life for you. You ought to be in a—a proper house, in a school, not leading this Bohemian life,' she said at last.

Muriel Taylor looked very gravely at her aunt as she answered, 'Aunt Lu, what is there not "proper" in this house? Do you mean because we have only three little rooms? Is that why you did not want Marthe to come the other day? And why do you call it Bohemian? Is it just that we are not rich? Why do you mind that so much? Is it because Madame Ballanfah is richer than we are? What does it all matter as long as we do nothing wrong? I don't know exactly what Bohemian means. I know papa once said it meant people who eat

without a tablecloth; but I think he was only making fun of me, for he said there aren't any real ones now, we are all too full of giggism; and mamma said that means keeping up appearances. But if Bohemian means having only a tiny flat and not being rich, I don't see what harm there is in that. And as for friends, I like Marthe, but she is the only girl I care for; and if you don't like her to come I won't ask her again, nor go and see her either. All I want is to stay with you, and not be sent away to another school. Oh Aunt Lu, if you knew how I hated it! I simply feel miserable at the thought. It's no good. I am not a bit like other girls; they seem to me to talk nonsense; at least, I can't find anything to say to them; they talk ever so long about nothing—at least nothing that I care about, and I feel so lonely in a roomful of girls.'

'Why, Muriel, I thought you liked this school!' exclaimed Miss Taylor, surprised.

'Oh, so I do!' replied Muriel hastily; 'that is quite different.' Then she added, as she saw her aunt look as if she did not understand, 'You see, I don't understand what the French girls say, and as I want to learn French I like listening to them, and it sounds so pretty that I never think whether it is interesting or not; though I should not like to be a boarder there, and I dare say it is as stupid conversation as the girls' at Miss Stephens' was,' she wound up naïvely.

To excuse Muriel, it should be explained that, being the only child, she had been accustomed from baby-

hood to listen to her father and mother, both very cultivated and interesting people, and had, moreover, been accustomed to join in their conversation; and, naturally, when she got among girls of her own age she found their conversation childish. Even her aunt used sometimes to feel as if Muriel was her equal in age; she was so old in some of her ways. At any rate she was wiser in this one thing, that she did not care in the least for what 'people thought,' which unfortunately was not the case with Miss Taylor.

This conversation had one good effect; it made the elder girl ashamed at her want of independence and moral courage, for it was really more because of what people might think, and because she did not like the idea of Muriel's schoolfellows looking down upon her for living in a student's lodging in the Quartier Latin, than that she thought the girl would really suffer.

Still, the dinner was a difficulty, and she wondered, when she turned her steps homewards the next evening about six o'clock, feeling rather tired and hungry, what the child had bought.

'Hullo, Aunt Lu!' was Muriel's unceremonious greeting as her young aunt came into the sitting-room; 'I did not expect you so soon;' and her head, which had only just appeared for a minute at the door of the tiny kitchen, disappeared again.

'What are you doing, Muriel?' inquired her aunt anxiously. 'I hope you are not cooking,' she added, as she smelt an unmistakable odour of frying.

'Don't you worry; it 's all my own money, and if

you don't like it you need not eat it,' cried Muriel from the kitchen.

'Eat what—your money?' inquired Miss Taylor, as a protest against Muriel's slipshod way of talking.

'No; the food. I have bought it with my own money, and there is some cold ham for you in case you are afraid of being made ill by my cooking.'

'I most certainly am,' replied Miss Taylor, 'and if you will bring the ham I will begin, for I am very hungry. I have been painting hard, and it has given me an appetite.'

'Have you done a good day's work?' inquired Muriel; and it will be noticed that the rôles were reversed. It was Muriel who made inquiries of her aunt as to how she had got on with her work, not Miss Taylor who inquired how her niece had fared at school.

'Very well, thank you. The master was quite pleased. We are making a study of the most wonderful old man who calls himself a hermit, and never cuts his hair or beard, which is down to his waist. He is a fanatic, and his expression has been so difficult to catch that some of the students made him look quite mad, but he is not that; and others made him an imbecile, which he is not either, but a man mad on one point. At times he had something rather ideal in his face, and yet an ideal perverted; and Monsieur Goupil gave us a lecture upon him, and said I was the only one who had painted him sympathetically, and that if one could not throw one's self into the

character of the subject one was painting it was useless to paint it. You must try to feel what your subject feels.'

'Goodness! I shall never be a painter. I could not feel sympathy with a man who never cut his hair or beard, or throw myself into that kind of character,' observed Muriel from the kitchen.

'I did not sympathise with that, but with the troubles he must have gone through before he gave up living like his fellow-beings. Think of the pity of his wasting his life trying to live a better one, which was so much worse. It has been very interesting, but it is tiring. Now come along, Muriel, and have some ham. You can eat your messes afterwards.'

'Coming!' cried Muriel, and her aunt heard a great scraping of a saucepan, and a moment afterwards Muriel, her face very flushed, came in carrying a dish which was covered, and which she placed before Miss Taylor, saying, 'This is the first course.'

With an air of resignation, Miss Taylor lifted the lid, and what was her surprise to find a well-cooked beefsteak, with *pommes frites*, as Muriel triumphantly called them, nicely arranged round.

'Who helped you to do this?' she inquired.

'No one. I did it all. I bought the beef myself; the woman chose out a tender bit for me, and Madame Laval says she could not have chosen better herself, and that she shall get me to do her shopping if ever she is ill. But make haste and eat it, Aunt Lu, because I have something else coming.'

'Well, Muriel, I withdraw and apologise. I did not know you could cook. I am sorry to say it is more than I can. I have had a very good dinner, thank you;' and she put away her plate and was going to get up from the table.

But Muriel stopped her. 'Oh, please, Aunt Lu, do be hungry again! I have a pudding;' and so saying, she got up and ran into the kitchen, and came back with a pudding, which was as good as the beefsteak.

'Semolina pudding! That is a favourite of mine, funnily enough,' said Miss Taylor. And then, seeing a smile on Muriel's face, she exclaimed, 'Did you know that?'

'Yes,' said Muriel. 'And now, Aunt Lu, will you please look at the bill and see if I have not been economical?'

Miss Taylor looked at the bill as desired, saying at the same time, 'I should forgive you if you had been a little extravagant, for it has been a very nice dinner;' but she was obliged to own that it was very economical.

'And now, please, Aunt Lu, may I stop with you?' said Muriel.

'Because you can cook?' laughed her aunt, though she was touched at the girl's devotion. 'I am afraid you will get tired of such hot work, especially as summer is coming on; but you have taken away the chief objection, for I see that you can do our marketing, and I shall be very glad if you will, for, you see,

I am so busy that I am afraid we shall starve if I have to see to it.'

'Yes,' said Muriel, 'papa used to say that the worst of your painting was that you never thought of anything else, and he did not believe you had enough to eat sometimes.'

And so this matter was arranged, and it was finally settled that Muriel should stay with her aunt, and there was no more said about any other arrangement.

'And a very good thing, too, for the *petite* has more sense in her little finger than her aunt has in the whole of her, when it comes to domestic matters,' said Madame Laval to her husband when she heard the news; 'and I do not believe she could have bought to more advantage if she had been my age instead of being only fourteen.'

Soon the market-women became used to the little girl in black coming with her *filet*, or string-bag, and a piece of paper on which was written the list of small purchases which she had to make, in which they were as much interested and about which they gave as much advice as if it had been for themselves and their own advantage; and very good advice they gave, and very good bargains Muriel got, though she did not know it.

Miss Taylor used sometimes to say that she ought not to waste her time cooking, but Muriel assured her aunt that she only spent an hour, or at most an hour and a half; 'and you know it is very useful, Aunt Lu, and papa asked especially that I might be taught to be domesticated.'

Finally, when her father wrote, that was the very thing, as it happened, of which he spoke, thinking that she was still at a school in England. And so Muriel continued to cook the dinner, and her aunt to eat the 'messes.' And Angelique's silly song bore fruit.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PHANTOM WEEPING-WILLOW.

'WHAT are you so cross about, Murielle?' inquired Marthe—who pronounced the name so—as she passed the bench in the cloisters, where Muriel was sitting with a book on her lap, which she was thumping with her closed hand.

'Cross! I! I am not cross at all. I am only trying to learn something that won't stop in my head,' replied Muriel, looking up, surprised at her French friend's accusation.

'*Eh bien!* you need not strike our poor history so. Is that how girls learn their lessons in England, or is it the French history that annoys you?' demanded Marthe, seating herself beside the English girl.

'I did not strike the history. You don't think I am so silly as that, I hope?' said Muriel.

'You did this,' explained Marthe, puckering up her face into an absurd imitation of Muriel's, and copying her action of thumping the book.

Muriel looked amused. 'Oh, I see. Yes, I have a habit of doing like that when I want to remember something that won't stay in my head.'

'*Eh bien!* I will try that next time I have one of your terrible verbs to conjugate. It is perhaps one

of our verbs that is escaping your memory?' inquired Marthe.

'No; it is the Revolution,' replied Muriel.

'What! the Revolution? The great Revolution? Is it possible that you cannot remember the date? It is one hundred years after yours, and it is one of the most important events in the world!' cried Marthe in excited tones.

'No, no, not the date. Of course I know that—1789. It is all the people, and things that happened. Oh yes, I know about their killing the king and the queen Marie Antoinette, and all the family and nobles.'

'Not all,' protested Marthe, 'else how could so many have emigrated?'

'Well, all they could catch,' put in Muriel, and then hurried on before Marthe could argue with her, as she always did if Muriel made any remark like this. 'But I have got them all mixed up. Who was Madame Royale, and why was she not guillotined like all the rest of the family?'

'They were not all killed—only Louis XVI. and the queen Marie Antoinette, whom the people hated from the very first, they say. It was the dreadful accident which took place at the festivities for her coronation that made them first turn against her, and think that she was come to be the cause of all their woes. At any rate,' Marthe added, as Muriel protested against this injustice, 'the people hated her because they declared that she was the cause

of all the tyranny of the king, and because she was an Austrian, and'—here Marthe shrugged her shoulders—'she did not understand the people. When they called for bread she did not care; she had no pity for them; she was an "aristocrat," and imagined that the people were only created for her pleasure and service. And'—this hastily put in, in a parenthesis—'you killed your own king for the same reason.'

Muriel wanted badly to say, 'Yes; but we did not go on killing everybody for the pleasure of it;' but she did not wish to offend Marthe, who was very quick-tempered, and did not like anything to be said against her dear country. So she only said, 'Well, it says in the history that Louis XVI. was put in the Temple, and his sister'——

'That was Madame Elisabeth. Ah, I allow it was a bad deed to guillotine her; but go on.'

'Louis XVI., and his sister Madame Elisabeth, and his family were all put into the Temple—and Aunt Lu says that was a prison—and only Madame Royale came out alive. What became of all the family? If they were alive, why did not they come out with this Madame Royale, who, I suppose, was a relation?'

'I tell you what you have done, Muriel; you have got all the wrong facts into your head. Louis had only two children, one girl who was called Madame Royale, and a little boy of five who was the little dauphin'——

'Oh yes, I remember we saw him in his cell with the rats, and his horrid jailers watching him and torturing him to death.'

'Well, he was Louis XVII. the minute his father was guillotined, though he was never crowned. Have you thumped that into your head?'

'Yes, I think so,' said Muriel rather doubtfully as she rose to go to class. Still, she got on very well at the history lesson which followed, and came home full of poor Louis XVI. and the Revolution.

'Do you know, Aunt Lu, there is one thing I can't understand, and that is why no one tried to get the little dauphin out of prison where he was being ill-treated. I wonder that we'—she meant England—'did not go to war about it.'

'Well, there *was* a coalition formed against France; but the French were roused to a pitch of enthusiasm, and drove their enemies back. But it is often said that the little dauphin was rescued; and as the remembrance of the poor little fellow seems to haunt you, let us say that it was so,' suggested Miss Taylor.

But Muriel, who was much given to pursuing a subject if it interested her, insisted upon reading and hearing all she could about Louis XVI. and his misfortunes.

'I can tell you one thing, Muriel. Madame Royale planted a weeping-willow in the Place du Temple on the spot where she and her father and mother and brother and aunt used to walk; and as I am sketch-

ing there to-morrow you can come with me, and we will put it in the sketch.'

'Then you must give me the sketch, Aunt Lu; I would like to have it so much!' exclaimed Muriel. 'And I will watch you sketching.'

'Very well,' said her aunt; 'but you must be prepared to stop some time, for I cannot come away after half-an-hour, you know.'

Muriel protested her willingness to stay as long as her aunt wanted; and the next day, accordingly, the trio started, for Marthe was invited to be of the party, and accepted the invitation with eagerness.

As they passed down the stairs the door of Angelique's room opened, and the French girl looked out and nodded to them. She did not offer to go with them, though she was dressed for a walk; and when Muriel gaily asked whether she was not coming to sketch in the Place du Temple, she shook her head and replied as gaily, '*Merci!* but I am going to amuse myself otherwise this afternoon,' and withdrew into her little room until the party had gone; which fact caused Miss Taylor to conclude that the amusement was something foolish which she did not want the 'proper English' (as she persisted in calling them) to know; and the English artist made some severe reflections to herself about Angelique and her incorrigible giddiness.

But when the three were quite gone Angelique came out again, and with her another girl looking very poor and neglected.

'Come along, 'Toinette! We will take a fiacre; you are not strong enough to walk, and there is no direct omnibus to the Rue des Blancmanteaux.'

'But you will be ashamed to be seen with me like this?' protested the other girl, touching her somewhat dirty skirt.

Angelique laughed. 'I ashamed! What for? Not at all. I drive with my friend, not with her toilet. Come, here is a fiacre.'

'It is always so. The foreigners always know more about one's town than one knows one's self,' said Marthe. 'Neither mamma nor I had ever heard that Madame Royale had planted a weeping-willow at the place where her family had suffered and where she had seen them all for the last time. I did know that she kept their rooms in the Louvre as they used to be, and lived in them a very sad life quite alone; but even papa, who has often passed through this little square, has never seen a weeping-willow at all, so I am going to tell him where to look for it.' Marthe chattered gaily as she walked along beside Miss Taylor through the quaint old streets, full of old houses with carving and bits of architecture which caused the artist to stop involuntarily every few minutes to admire some door or portico, and even once to take a tiny sketch of a beautiful façade, to the disgust of Muriel, who did not like dirty streets nor the dirty little gamins who surrounded her aunt the moment she took out her little sketch-book and pencil.

Now, the Rue des Blancmanteaux is not far from

the Place du Temple, but it did not occur to Angelique that she would come across the aunt and niece—not that it would have stopped her if it had occurred to her, though she would have preferred not to do so.

But this was just what did happen. As the cab was turning into a narrow street of this 'old Paris' the coachman called out to three pedestrians who were going to cross the street before him to get out of his way, as is the manner of Parisian cabbies, and the youngest of the three looked up and exclaimed, 'Why, there is Mademoiselle Angelique! But what an odd-looking girl she has with her!'

Both her companions looked up and saw Angelique just as she had seen them.

Acting upon impulse, as usual, Angelique just nodded to them, and, leaning towards her friend, took her hand and said something funny which made 'Toinette laugh.

'*Mon dieu!* you know those people. Who are they? Ah, models, of course!' cried Marthe—who had only seen Angelique's back and had chiefly noticed her companion—without meaning in the least to be rude.

Muriel was going to reply indignantly that one was a friend and a very nice girl, when Miss Taylor replied for her, 'One is an artist at the same studio as I, who unfortunately lives in the same house.' Then she spoke of something else.

And Marthe tactfully spoke no more of the two

girls in the carriage, one of whom was so very shabby and untidy-looking.

'I am content, very content!' observed Angelique, *à propos* of nothing, after they had passed the three on their way to the Place du Temple.

'Content! I think you are always content; but why are you content at this moment?' inquired her companion. 'It is perhaps because you are doing a kind action, and if so I understand it; otherwise, I should think you would not be content to have met that tall, grave-looking young lady—English, I suppose—who looked so shocked at me.'

'That is what I am content about,' observed Angelique; but she did not explain why, except to herself, to whom she said, 'It is as well that Miss Louise should know that I am not "proper," and then I shall not begin to get to care so much what people think, as she does. I do not want to get like that. And as for being shocked at 'Toinette! Poor 'Toinette! she cannot help having got so poor and being a little—untidy; one loses heart when one is poor and ill. And, finally, I will do what I like in spite of Miss Taylor.'

From which it will be seen that Angelique was not so content as she wished to appear, but that she was trying not to care what people thought; and as her conscience was clear, and as there is no harm in driving about with a poor friend, even if she has 'lost heart so much that her dress is not clean,' Angelique soon recovered her good spirits.

In fact, she got over the meeting sooner than Louise Taylor, who, as has been said, unfortunately did mind too much what people thought, and was very vexed with Angelique for such proceedings, for she imagined that this was the kind of person Angelique amused herself with, and wished it had not happened just when they were becoming friendly.

However, Marthe chattered on, and Angelique was soon forgotten.

At last they came to the Place du Temple, and made their way to the point at the south side of the square where the weeping-willow is said to have been planted.

'It ought to be here, near a little rock,' said Miss Taylor, consulting her book; 'and there is the rock, but I can see no weeping-willow.'

The two girls peered about among the shrubs, and even made a tour of the square while Miss Taylor sat down to sketch. Presently they came back to her.

'Aunt Lu, it's very funny, there is not a single weeping-willow in the whole square; and Marthe asked the guardian, and he says there is none, and that there has never been one as long as he can remember,' said Muriel, puckering her brows.

'Well, I have only Hare as my authority; but I never knew him wrong in a positive statement before,' said Miss Taylor, glancing from her drawing to the view she was taking. 'We will look up some Life of Madame Royale, which perhaps will explain it; and,

anyhow, it would be very old—more than a hundred years, you must remember,' she observed, and dismissed the subject from her mind.

But not so the two girls. They grew tired of sitting watching the sketching, and wandered round the square.

'*Eh bien*, young ladies, are you still looking for this wonderful tree which madame the princess planted?' inquired the guardian in a joking way.

'Yes,' said Marthe. 'I wish we could find it. The guide-book says it was there once. It was the sister of Louis XVII. who planted it where she had spent her last days with her family, and I think it so poetical,' she explained.

'Well, since it interests you so much, you may ask the gardener. He has been here all his life, and knows every tree in the square; and here he comes.'

An old man sauntered up to the guardian, who accosted him thus, 'Now, monsieur, tell these young ladies where to find a weeping-willow that the princess planted here a hundred years or so ago.'

The man looked curiously down on the two eager faces, and replied, 'A weeping-willow! I know of no such tree.'

'You do not know of a weeping-willow!' exclaimed Marthe.

'Not in this square. There is none,' he declared.

'Then where is it? There used to be one—the history of Paris by an Englishman says so,' persisted Marthe.

'Why do you want to know about it?' inquired the gardener.

'Because it is interesting, and will help us to remember the Revolution. We are sorry for Madame Royale and her unhappy family,' said Marthe.

'Ah, well, you cannot see the tree. It is no longer there; it was pulled up many years ago,' said the gardener.

'Oh, what a shame!' cried Muriel.

'It was not a shame, for it was necessary. It was so old that it became a danger, and I had to cut it down myself. I did surround it with iron bars, and keep it as long as I could.'

'Then you know all about it?' cried Marthe.

'Yes, I know all about it, and I gave the pieces to the Musée Carnavalet; but I think they have thrown them into a garret, for I have never seen them there. If you are interested in that family, see, there are the trees under which Louis used to walk with his family;' and he pointed out some chestnuts. The gardener was evidently a Republican, for he refused to call Louis XVI. the king. As for the chestnuts, they most certainly were not old enough to have given shelter to any one in 1789, so that it is to be feared the gardener was hoaxing them.

'Oh, thank you!' cried the two girls as they walked off to sit under the same trees which they imagined had sheltered poor Louis XVI. in his last walks in his prison-garden, and tried to picture Marie Antoinette by his side, and the little girl with her brave aunt

Surrounded by a cluster of little children, who were watching her movements with great interest.

M. PAGE 133.

walking together, while the little dauphin, whom writers have described as an 'angel of beauty,' played at ball or *ballon* with the faithful valet Clery.

'What a nice, intelligent man, and how amiable he was!' observed Marthe, alluding to the gardener.

'Yes; but fancy his declaring that he knew nothing about it,' cried Muriel indignantly, 'when he had dug it up himself! If you had not told him why you wanted to know he would not have said anything at all.'

But Marthe was not in the least shocked at the mendacity of the gardener; she only shrugged her shoulders and remarked, 'Naturally, he did not want to be bothered; but when he saw that we were not asking for the sake of talking, then he became interested, and took the trouble to tell us all about it. And if you like we can go and see that *musée;* it is the house of Madame de Sévigné—you know, the lady who wrote such beautiful letters to her daughter.'

'I should like to go there. When could we go? Is it far from where we live?' inquired Muriel.

'It is far from our home, but it is quite near here. I wonder if we could go alone? You are accustomed to go about alone, so perhaps we might go, two of us together,' said Marthe doubtfully.

'We will ask Aunt Lu,' said Muriel, and the two turned their steps towards the spot where Miss Taylor was sketching.

There they found her surrounded by a cluster of little children, who were watching her movements

with great interest. But Muriel surveyed them with disgust.

'Oh Aunt Lu, how can you let these dirty little children crowd round you so? Shall I send them away?' she cried, making at the same time a motion with her hand to the children to go a little farther off.

'No, no, Muriel, pray do not interfere with them. I want them for my sketch. You had better go for a little walk if you do not like them to be near you,' replied her aunt.

'May we go as far as the house of Madame de Sévigné, please?' inquired Muriel. 'The gardener says the weeping-willow had to be pulled up because it was too old, and the pieces are in her ancient house.'

'Is it near here?' asked Miss Taylor in an abstracted tone, for her attention was fixed upon the figure of a tiny boy who she was afraid might not stay very long.

'Yes, quite near,' replied Marthe. 'We shall be back in a few minutes.'

'Very well,' agreed Miss Taylor, who was rather glad to get rid of them, and they went off. If Miss Taylor had known through what dirty streets and twistings and turnings the girls would have to go to Madame de Sévigné's house, or the Musée Carnavalet, as it is now called, she would probably have refused her consent; but as it was, she went on very happily with her painting, and did not notice their

absence until her models forsook her; and, her sketch being complete, she began to get hungry and to think of moving on.

She then looked round for the two girls, and forgetting for the moment that they had left the square, she went in search of them, and found the same gardener who had given them the information about Madame Royale's weeping-willow.

'Well, mademoiselle, did the young ladies find the tree they sought?' he inquired.

Miss Taylor started. 'Dear me!' she exclaimed, 'to be sure they have gone to some house to see the trunk of the tree which you told them was preserved there. Where is this house?'

'Ah, it is some way off; it is the ancient *hôtel* of Madame de Sévigné. I cannot easily tell you how to go; but follow this street till you come to Rue Vieille du Temple, and then turn'—— Here followed a number of directions to which Miss Taylor listened in dismay.

'But they will never have found it! And to go all that way alone!' she exclaimed. Then, thanking the man, and telling him that if the girls returned and looked for her, she should be much obliged if he would tell them they were to go straight home. she hurried off.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE HAUNTS OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

MURIEL and Marthe went off together laughing and talking very happily; and as Marthe had been to the *musée* twice, she knew the way without asking, and led the way down the same streets that the gardener had told Miss Taylor to follow.

At first Muriel was interested in what Marthe was saying, and did not notice how far she was going. She wanted Marthe to explain why madame lived in a hotel instead of a house of her own.

'But it was her own house. Large houses are called *hôtels* in Paris. Have you not often seen the notice, "Hôtel to Let"?' replied Marthe.

'Yes; but I thought it was a proper hotel,' observed Muriel.

'So it is a proper *hôtel*. All rich people live in *hôtels* in Paris. A *hôtel* is a house to live in,' persisted Marthe.

It was at this juncture that Muriel, who had her attention distracted from the conversation, suddenly said, 'Why, Marthe, have we gone wrong? We have come a long way.'

'Not so very far. We shall be there in another five minutes,' said Marthe.

'But we have been walking more than ten minutes

now, and how can we get back in five minutes?' objected Muriel.

'Oh, we shall not be back so soon as that; but what matter? Your aunt is busy; she will not miss us if we stay away an hour,' said Marthe carelessly.

Marthe had forgotten her statement to Miss Taylor that they would be back in a few minutes; but Muriel had not. She thought that Marthe was wilfully deceiving Miss Taylor, and was not pleased. However, she did not like to vex Marthe, so she went on, determined just to look at the willow-trunk and come away at once.

But this was easier said than done, for when they arrived at the *musée*, they found that they must go straight on through all the rooms; and indeed, once inside, Muriel was interested in seeing Madame de Sévigné's apartments and the Gallery of the Revolution, where Marthe pointed out Robespierre and Marat, and showed her the death-warrant of Louis XVI. 'so as to fix it in her head.'

'Look, Muriel, here is a lock of Robespierre's hair sent by his sister. Look—you are not looking!' cried Marthe.

Whereupon Muriel did look with disapproval. 'He was a monster of iniquity,' she observed, 'and you speak as if you were proud of him.'

'I do not approve of all he did—of course not,' she added, seeing that Muriel looked horrified; 'but at least he helped to free France.'

Muriel did not reply, this view of the tyrant being

too shocking to her. 'At any rate, you will look at this order sent by Louis XVI. telling the Swiss Guard to cease firing on the insurgents, and this portrait of the Veuve Capet in the Conciergerie,' Marthe said, for she never lost her good humour.

'Yes, I will look at that,' said Muriel, as she tried in vain to read Louis XVI.'s order, and gazed at the touching portrait of Marie Antoinette, called 'the Widow Capet.'

Then Muriel's attention was attracted by the model of the Bastille, and she stopped to read the account of the famous storming of the fortress.

'Ah yes, that was a sight; but they say that there were no instruments of torture nor any prisoners in underground dungeons, as was imagined,' said Marthe, nodding her head. 'Papa says that was a foolish deed; but then papa is rather like an Englishman—he does not excite himself over liberty and such ideas. He says people talk too much and act too little.'

'Well, that is quite true, Marthe,' observed Muriel, who sometimes found that she could not get in her share of talking at school unless she talked at the same time as her schoolfellows, as the French did.

'If one does not talk how is one to tell one's thoughts? I find people who only think very dull; it is like Madame Clare, who only says what is necessary. She depresses me, and I am quite unhappy if I am left alone with her for long. But look, here is a gift of your king. What is it? A

piece of the *Victory!* What is the *Victory?* How *drôle!*'

'It was the ship Nelson died on,' explained Muriel, coming to look at the relic of the old ship. 'I wonder why the king gave it to the French.'

And then Marthe exclaimed, 'Why, Muriel, that reminds me we have not thought of the piece of wood we came to see!'

'No, we have not. Ask that guardian, Marthe; perhaps he knows. It may even be in this room, as they have one piece of wood.'

But the guardian did not know. He had never heard of it.

'Ask him again, and tell him the gardener said he had brought it here,' persisted Muriel. 'I dare say he is only telling a story to save himself trouble, like the gardener.'

'I do not think so. He shook his head so decidedly,' said Marthe; but to please Muriel she went back and asked him again.

'Mademoiselle, I have been here for years, and I know every exhibit in the *musée*, and I am sure it is not here,' he declared. And with this they had to be satisfied.

From there they wandered and looked at the doors which had shut the prison cells of Robespierre and Madame Roland and others, decorated by the imprisoned nobles, showing what were their thoughts in that awful time, some gay and light-hearted as ever, and some grave.

Then Muriel wanted to go, but Marthe begged to stay.

'Just come into one room more, Muriel; I want to do something very interesting there,' she said.

'What on earth do you want to do?' asked Muriel curiously.

Marthe nodded in a mysterious way. 'You will see if you come.'

Muriel could not resist the temptation of going, and followed her lively friend into the next room to see what she was going to do that was so interesting.

To her surprise, Marthe looked round to see if the guardian of the *salle* was watching; and as she noticed that he was, she walked on, looking first at one thing and then at another, till he sauntered into another room, when she left Muriel's side, darted to the end of the room, and sat down in an old and shabby arm-chair covered with worn leather, to which was attached a reading-desk, which Marthe drew towards her and pretended to read from.

Muriel stared at her in astonishment, wondering what on earth all this pantomime meant.

At this juncture the guardian returned, and at sight of him Marthe struggled to get out of the chair, which was not an easy matter, for it had a bar across to prevent its being used, and it was easier to get in than to get out, as Marthe found.

'Stay where you are! Do not struggle!' cried the guardian, hastening to the rescue. 'I might have guessed what you were loitering for. It is always to

that chair that you young people run if I have not my eye upon you all the time. You would wear it out if you were allowed. And what do you know of Voltaire, *hein?* Nothing, I should imagine, *par exemple.*'

'So that was the interesting thing you wanted to do!' exclaimed Muriel, laughing at Marthe as she at last got free and came to Muriel looking half-triumphant and half-ashamed. 'Fancy your liking Voltaire as much as that! You do like funny people, Marthe!'

'How? Why do you say that? Was he not a great man? Did he not write great books?' cried Marthe.

'I don't know what he wrote. I only know that he was an infidel, and then was afraid to die,' replied Muriel. 'What did he write?'

Marthe did not reply for a minute, and then she said, 'You know, Muriel, it is time for us to be returning to the Place du Temple.'

Muriel started. She had not thought of her aunt since they had entered the *musée,* and, to her dismay, she found that it was now two hours since they had left Miss Taylor. 'Oh Marthe, what will Aunt Lu be thinking?' she cried. 'Oh, do let us make haste!'

But more haste, less speed. In going out of the *hôtel* or *musée* they took the wrong turning, and as a result lost themselves in the labyrinth of narrow and ancient streets which surround the Rue de

Sévigné. When at last they did find themselves at the Place du Temple, Miss Taylor, as has been related, had gone, and they looked in vain for her.

'I can't believe she would go without us,' said Muriel.

'But you must believe it, since she is no longer here,' expostulated Marthe, who was also beginning to get hungry. 'Let us go home. She will be sure to have gone there.'

'I am sure she has not. She would know that I should return here,' persisted Muriel. 'I shall stay until she comes back. She has only just gone for a few minutes, you will see.' So saying, Muriel seated herself on a bench with an air of determination; and Marthe, looking sideways at her determined face, decided that it was no good arguing the matter, so she followed her friend's example and sat down beside her with an air of resignation.

'What did Voltaire write, Marthe?' said Muriel suddenly to the French girl.

'How should I know? You say that he was an infidel, so how do you expect me to have read his books?' demanded Marthe.

'I didn't expect you to have read them; but you seemed to like him so much that you squeezed yourself into his chair, and so I supposed you had some reason for doing it,' said Muriel.

'He was a great man—that is all I have heard about him till to-day,' said Marthe rather petulantly, for she was tired of sitting still, a thing she was

never known to do willingly for more than ten minutes at a time.

'How do you know he was such a great man?' said Muriel.

'Because people say so. Besides, his arm-chair was there, and so carefully guarded,' cried Marthe.

'Is that all?' said Muriel, and the conversation languished, for they were both very hungry, and Muriel was beginning to feel rather anxious as to what her aunt would say to her when she saw her, and whether it was wise to stay there on the chance of her aunt's coming back, about which she began to feel doubtful as time went on. But Muriel, as has been said before, was very obstinate; and, having declared that her aunt was sure to come back, she did not choose to own that she had been wrong, so how much longer they might have sat there is doubtful if the gardener had not happened to pass that way, and, noticing them, exclaimed, 'What! you have returned, then? The lady-artist was greatly unquiet about you.'

'Oh, where is she?' cried Muriel, springing to her feet.

'Where indeed? She has gone to look for you. Fortunately I was able to tell her that you had gone to see Madame de Sévigné's ancient *hôtel*, and she followed you there; but how have you missed her?' inquired the gardener.

'We took the wrong turning,' explained Marthe.—'I wonder will she come back here?' she observed to Muriel.

'But no, she has gone home, if she did not find you at the *musée;* and she requested me to beg you to follow her there at once,' said the man.

Muriel was up and off before he had finished. 'Did you ever see such a man? Why did he not tell us at once that she wanted us to go home? He couldn't say black is black and white is white if he tried,' she muttered in disgust.

'How? Why could he not? What funny things you do say, Muriel! Is it because he had a little conversation with us before he told us to go home? One would think you had to pay a sou for each word he said.'

'It is worse to waste time than money, and he kept us there talking nonsense for five minutes at least,' she said in an injured tone.

'Well now, we will take this 'bus, and with a "correspondence" it will take us home in half-an-hour, so be tranquil, please,' said Marthe coaxingly.

The 'bus with a 'correspondence' did take them home, and there they found Miss Taylor at the door of the *concierge's* lodge. She had been too anxious to go upstairs.

While Miss Taylor stood in the lodge, starting at every footstep, and coming forward to see if it was the two girls, Mademoiselle Angelique came in. Miss Taylor looked as usual to see who it was; but as soon as she caught sight of Angelique, acting upon the impulse of the moment, she withdrew hastily, and, as she thought, before the French art-student had seen her.

But she was mistaken. Angelique had seen Miss Taylor, and had observed her hasty retreat, and passed with a light laugh. 'So, she will not acknowledge the friend of poor 'Toinette, who has never done any one any harm in her life! Well, let her stiffen herself if she please, what is that to me?' and Angelique ran lightly upstairs and into her little room, and as a proof of how little it was to her, wiped away a tear, laughed again, and took out a sketch which she proceeded to work at. After a little while the corners of her mouth twitched, and soon she was smiling as she worked. 'If only she could see it,' she murmured, then drew back to admire the sketch, and smiled again.

Perhaps it was as well that Miss Taylor could not see the sketch, which was one of a series of 'Visitors to Paris,' and portrayed two English tourists doing Paris with their red *Murrays* under their arms, and with the supercilious look which is supposed to be a mark of the English abroad.

As a matter of fact, the expression was the expression which Louise Taylor's face took when she did not approve of anything; and Angelique had promptly sketched it, though she had the good taste to alter the face so that Miss Taylor would not have recognised herself unless she had known that Angelique had done it; but at present she had not seen the sketch, and it was only by an accident that she did see it later on, and recognised it; but by that time she was so much improved that she only laughed.

Meanwhile Angelique found her good temper returning, and sang cheerfully over her painting; while Miss Taylor waited anxiously downstairs for the return of the two girls, who presently appeared hurrying up the steep street.

'Oh Aunt Lu, I am so sorry! I did not think the *musée* was so far, and it was so interesting that I forgot all about you,' cried Muriel so penitently that Miss Taylor's annoyance melted away.

'Well, well, never mind now that you are home safely; only, I shall know next time what Marthe's five minutes mean,' she said, laughing.

Marthe apologised very prettily, and then the maid who had been waiting patiently for her young mistress for the last two hours took her away, and Muriel followed her aunt upstairs to their little flat.

'Do you know, Aunt Lu, I think the French can't help putting things in the way they think looks best,' said Muriel as they sat down to a late tea, for it was too late to cook dinner, and Miss Taylor would not hear of Muriel's going out shopping that evening.

'I don't quite see what you mean, Muriel. What is that remark *à propos* of? Is it Marthe's apology?'

'No, not that only,' said Muriel; 'it was *à propos* of this milk. Why does Madame Laval call it cream? And why, when you ask for cream, do they give you milk and call it cream, and then when you object they say, "Ah, real cream?"'

'A writer once said that it was because they were "a euphemistic people," and I really do not see why

they should not, if in their opinion it makes the milk taste nicer.'

'It isn't a fact. I do like facts,' Muriel said with emphasis; 'and it really saves a lot of trouble. For instance, look what a lot of trouble Marthe gave you by saying that the *hôtel* or *musée*, whichever it is, was quite near! And yet she did not mean to deceive you.'

'If I had known how far off it was I should not have allowed you to go at all, and how would you have liked that?' said Miss Taylor.

'We could have gone another day, and I should not have nearly died of hunger,' said Muriel.

'You have quickly recovered from death's door,' said Miss Taylor dryly.

And Muriel laughed when she saw how she had been caught.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TALE OF 'TOINETTE.

'I SUPPOSE you have heard the news, Mademoiselle Taylor?' said one of the girls at the studio to Louise Taylor when she came in one morning in her quiet, dignified way, as if nothing could ruffle or excite her.

'No,' she replied, turning her serious blue eyes upon the speaker. 'What is it?'

'Why, about the prizes. There is one offered by the School of Art as usual, and this year the master offers a prize—a scholarship, so to say—to the one who paints the best picture on our country tour; and what do you think the prize is to be? No less than free tuition under him for three years! Now, what do you think of such generosity from a Frenchman?' the girl wound up triumphantly.

'I think it is very good of him; but I do not know why you should say "from a Frenchman." I never supposed they were less generous than Englishmen.'

'Never mind, Marie; tell us, do you mean to try?' inquired another student.

'Of course she means to try; we all do. It would be very odd if we did not,' put in Angelique.

'Then you will have no chance, Angelique; for it will lie between you two, if I am not mistaken,' observed a third.

'I am afraid I shall not be able to compete,' remarked Miss Taylor very quietly, 'for I do not mean to go on the sketching-tour.'

'Not go on the sketching-tour!' echoed several voices. 'But why not? Why, you must come; it is part of our course of study here, and Monsieur Goupil will be dreadfully annoyed if you do not.'

Miss Taylor said nothing; and Angelique, seeing that she did not like being questioned, turned the conversation by asking, 'Tell me, will any of you help poor 'Toinette? She is better now, and if she could go away for a change she would be able to begin work again in the autumn.'

'Ah, poor 'Toinette! I will gladly help; but I can give but two francs,' said one of the girls, 'and it will cost several hundreds of francs to send her away for the summer.'

'Not at all. I have an acquaintance, a peasant woman in Brittany, who will take her for a mere song. All we have to do is to pay for her journey and give her a hundred francs, and when she gets well she will earn enough by what she paints for the visitors to that part of Brittany to keep herself,' said Angelique. 'She is very clever at painting little trifles of that sort.'

'*Bravo, Ange de bonté!* You will deserve your

name if you continue to be thus wise and calculating. I did not know 'Toinette was such a friend of yours,' exclaimed one of the art-students.

Angelique's usual answer to such a remark would have been some mischievous trick, but to-day she was evidently in earnest about collecting for her plan; and though some of the students were poor and struggling, others were well-off, and before the morning was over she had obtained either in money or promises the amount she wanted.

Miss Taylor had not taken any part in the discussion—first of all because she did not choose to speak to Angelique unless absolutely obliged by politeness; and, secondly, because a kind of shyness kept her from giving money in public.

Suddenly the door opened and another student entered.

'Ah Mademoiselle Jolibois, just in time! I want some money from you,' cried Angelique.

'I am sorry I have this moment spent my last centime,' replied the new-comer with a smile which belied her words.

'Nonsense! It is for 'Toinette. You remember 'Toinette, our fellow-student who had so much talent, but who caught a fever and disappeared, and is now in very poor circumstances.'

'Ah, that accounts for it. I wondered who your very disreputable friend was when I met you yesterday.'

Here Miss Taylor, who had only half-listened to all this conversation, looked up suddenly, and by

chance met Angelique's eye. The latter flushed and turned away.

'Never mind me and my disreputable friends,' said Angelique testily. 'I do not choose my friends for their clothes, and if I did I might fall upon many a one far less worthy than 'Toinette; though I grant that she has lost courage, and does not care for her personal appearance as much as she might.'

'*Ma foi!* no. I am sure you would have been shocked, Mademoiselle Taylor, if you had seen Angelique with 'Toinette yesterday. I had made up my mind to expostulate with her for the sake of our reputation — we students of Monsieur Goupil who are so eminently respectable,' continued Mademoiselle Jolibois. And she was surprised, on looking at Miss Taylor, to notice that she was evidently much embarrassed by the remark.

Angelique bent over her drawing, and the arm that she was foreshortening was quite out of drawing, for she was not paying attention to what she was doing.

For some reason, Angelique had been desperately hurt by Miss Taylor's behaviour, and had not taken it as lightly as she generally did such marks of disapproval, and she felt a secret joy at the revenge she was having.

As for Louise Taylor, it is to be doubted whether her drawing received much more attention than Angelique's, though as a rule she allowed nothing to distract her thoughts while she was in the studio. To-day, however, the English girl felt that she had

acted very much like a Pharisee on that occasion, and, she began to think, on other occasions also.

Moreover, there was another thing which occupied her thoughts, and that was the prize or scholarship which was to be the result of a month's sketching-tour, in both of which it was now out of her power to participate. But the matter which troubled Louise Taylor most, because she had a very tender conscience, was her unkindness to Angelique de Ségur; and when the latter left the studio to go home to lunch, Miss Taylor hastened after her and said frankly, 'I am sorry, mademoiselle, that I was so stupid yesterday.'

Angelique turned round with a smile very different from her usual mocking expression, and said pleasantly, 'Do not speak of it. I do not wonder at your being shocked. 'Toinette really ought not to let herself go; her skirt was quite dirty and torn, but she said she had no money to buy food, far less cotton and needles. You see, she has been very ill, and one loses courage and energy then.'

'I should be very glad to subscribe a little to your fund, if you will allow me,' said Miss Taylor, as she handed Angelique some money.

'Thank you very much! Poor 'Toinette will be delighted when I see her this afternoon. I shall get her to go away at once, when she has bought a few necessities. It is lovely weather for the country. What a pity you cannot come with us on the tour! It would be so useful to you, and you would see a

very picturesque part of France. Are you sure it is impossible?' inquired Angelique.

'Quite impossible, I am sorry to say. I have my little niece with me,' replied Miss Taylor with decision.

'Why not send her to Les Mesdames?' asked Angelique quickly.

'I could not send her to a boarding-school,' said Miss Taylor, without giving any explanation.

Angelique had too much tact to ask her why, but only said, 'That is a great pity, both because of the practice and because of the prize, which would be a feather in your cap. Still, you can try for the public prize.'

'The public prize I have no chance of, and I am not at all sure that I should win that other feather even if I went on the tour,' said Miss Taylor, laughing. 'I fancy you are more likely to do that.'

Angelique shrugged her shoulders. 'I do not paint as well as you; but I wish you would do a very foolish thing.'

Miss Taylor looked at her friend in astonishment. They were sitting at lunch in the little restaurant on the Boulevard St Germain which Muriel called Thackeray's restaurant, and Angelique looked half-quizzically at her companion across the narrow table, and said, 'Will you do it?'

'I don't understand—what do you want me to do?' inquired Miss Taylor, who was very anxious to make amends to Angelique for her unkindness of the day before, and did not want to hurt her friend's feelings.

'I want you to take my advice, which I suppose you will think very foolish.'

'What is your advice? Tell me first, and if it is possible I will take it,' replied Miss Taylor with a smile.

'I want you to go and consult Les Mesdames before you finally make up your mind not to come with us on the tour,' said Angelique.

Miss Taylor looked, as she felt, surprised. It was the last advice she had expected from Angelique; but she only replied, 'But I thought I had told you that I could not leave my niece with them?'

'I know. I did not mean that. I only meant that they are so very sensible and wise women that I think they might find a way out of the difficulty.'

'I am afraid that is impossible; but I think I will take your advice all the same, for I should like to speak to them about my niece.'

Angelique looked pleased, and said no more. At the door she took leave of her companion to go to see 'Toinette, to whom she had such pleasant news of her fellow-students' generosity to impart; and Miss Taylor went back to the studio, feeling very humbled, with her respect for Angelique considerably increased.

But it is difficult to please every one. Angelique's seriousness was not welcomed at the studio. 'If l'Ange is going to be so angelic we shall indeed be dull. Who will lead the revels at Carnival or

head our merry expeditions?' said one of the students discontentedly.

'Oh, it is only a fad of a moment. You will see she will be as wild as ever on the tour; it is only the influence of l'Anglaise, who is so very serious and superior. When she is in the country, Mademoiselle l'Ange will be as gay as she was last year. Do you remember the riot we made in that little inn, and the floral procession we made through the little town? The people thought we were all mad. What fun it was!' The others laughed. 'She will think of new pranks this year, you will see. It is a good thing l'Anglaise is not going.'

'Yes; and not only for that reason, but also for Angelique's sake. If she goes, good-bye to Angelique's chance of the prize.'

But at this juncture l'Anglaise, as they called Miss Taylor, came in, and with her some of the more serious students, and work was commenced in earnest, without Angelique, who was off on her errand of mercy.

'I am sorry you are not coming with us, mademoiselle,' said one of the girls, who had just said that it was a good thing.

'Thank you,' was all the reply, as Miss Taylor took up her position and set to work at her study without another word.

This afternoon her thoughts went with her pencil, and she got on well.

'Yes, you have great powers both of absorption and

expression in your work which should carry you far. But you want freedom and practice; you will get them on our tour. It will do you much good,' said the master as he stopped at the English girl's easel.

It was on the tip of Louise Taylor's tongue to tell the painter that she was not going on the tour; but the remembrance of her promise to Angelique recurred to her, and she felt that it would be breaking it to make up her mind finally before she had done what the French girl had asked her. Besides, she reflected that it was just as well to wait another opportunity, for if she told Monsieur Goupil now he would probably demand an explanation, which she would rather not give in public. So, to her own surprise, she found herself acting upon the advice of a girl whom a month ago she had looked upon as the most foolish person she had ever met.

Muriel was very glad when Angelique, evidently upon the invitation of her aunt, appeared in the flat, with news of her protégée, who was so overcome by her good fortune after such privation that she could do nothing but cry, so Angelique told them.

'I only made her stop by beginning to tear up her skirt, which alarmed her greatly, for it appeared that she had no other to go out in, and she did not know how she was to do her shopping. But that was just what I wanted, for after that I was obliged to go and do it for her, and I bought more sensible things.—Oh yes, Mademoiselle Muriel, I know you think no one but yourself can market; but you are

mistaken. You do not know me yet,' said Angelique with a nod.

'Well, I'm glad you tore up that skirt. I noticed it yesterday, and it was—horrid!' said Muriel.

And this was the last of that episode, and the end of Miss Taylor's doubts about Angelique's worthiness, though it was not quite the end of Angelique's mischievous tricks.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A SPOILT GIRL.

MURIEL was up as usual at half-past six o'clock, and her aunt, who had never taken to the early rising habits of the French, listened to her niece singing as she bustled about grinding the coffee and boiling the milk for breakfast, which she brought to her aunt before the latter was up.

'One cannot say that she is idle, the *petite*,' exclaimed Madame Laval one morning when she came up very early and found Muriel thus engaged. 'It is not many young demoiselles that would be so industrious, and I hear at the good Madames' that she is as industrious there. Ah, you are fortunate!' And here madame sighed, and her listeners knew that she was thinking of her own niece who had come to stay with her, and done nothing but 'put ribbons in her hair,' according to madame, and, instead of helping her aunt, had been such a trouble that she was sent home, never to come again.

Muriel had often heard this tale, and the contrast drawn between her and Mimi Laval, to her own advantage; and, if the truth be told, agreed with the opinion held by the wife of the *concierge* of her usefulness, and, without knowing it, was beginning to get rather proud of herself and her doings.

'Now, Aunt Lu, taste this coffee and see if it is not good,' she said one morning, when she took her aunt's breakfast in to her.

It was very nice to have one's breakfast brought to one, and Louise Taylor was not very strong, which was her excuse for being lazy in the morning; nor had she the energetic character of her niece; but she sometimes wondered if this depending upon the girl was not fostering the very faults she ought to check, and if she ought to let the child do as much as she did. And this morning Muriel's air of satisfaction did not please her. 'I suppose it is the same as usual,' she remarked.

'Yes; but I want to hear you say how nice it is,' said Muriel naïvely.

'Why?' inquired Miss Taylor.

'Oh, I don't know; only it is nice to hear you say it,' replied Muriel.

'It is not such a very difficult thing to make a cup of coffee, especially in France, when one has been shown how the French do it,' was Miss Taylor's reply, rather to Muriel's vexation.

Muriel loitered a little in her aunt's room, and seemed about to speak; but Miss Taylor appeared so intent upon her coffee, and so unconscious of Muriel's presence, that the girl went away without saying what she was going to say.

Presently, however, she came back and sat down on the wide window-seat. When Muriel had made up her mind to say or do something, as will have

been noticed, she was not easily to be turned from her intention; so, settling herself down for a talk, she began, 'Do you know, Aunt Lu'——

'I know that your breakfast will be getting cold, Muriel. Go and take it at once,' interrupted her aunt.

'I can't, because I have only just made it, and the coffee has to drop through the coffee-pot, and it takes quite five minutes,' said Muriel.

'Why do you not make enough for us both at once?' asked Miss Taylor.

'Because it is much nicer made in the little "one-cup" coffee-pot, and when I do a thing I like to do it well,' replied Muriel.

'So do most people—at least so they ought to,' agreed her aunt.

'I don't know about that. The servants at home used to make horrid coffee, because they did not take the trouble to do it properly. Father used to say that it was extraordinary how few people were thorough in their work.'

Miss Taylor did not reply; she felt that Muriel had the best of the argument, and that her attempt at a snub had failed.

Muriel continued, 'But you do think I am thorough, Aunt Lu, don't you? And I have made you more comfortable since I have been here?'

'Yes, dear,' said Miss Taylor, for she was touched by Muriel's devotion, and this was true.

'So you see, after all, I did right to come; because

it is not only to you that I have been of some good. Madame Ballanfah says that I have been very useful to Marthe, and that she is learning more about her own country and history than she knew before, and learning to be thorough like me. So do say that I did right,' begged Muriel in a coaxing tone.

'No, I can't say that, for I think you did very wrong, though it has not turned out so badly as I feared,' replied Miss Taylor.

Muriel got up from her seat and went into the other room without a word.

Miss Taylor looked after her, and when Muriel was at her breakfast observed, 'I shall not be home till rather late to-day, Muriel. I am going out.'

'Do you mean that you are going out after you have been to the studio?' inquired Muriel with surprise, for this was a most unusual thing.

'Yes; so I shall not be back till late. You must have your dinner alone. I will give you the money to get it before I go this morning,' replied Miss Taylor.

'Won't you be home to dinner?' cried Muriel, much disappointed.

'No, I am afraid not. At any rate, do not wait for me, for I shall only want a cup of tea; it will be too late to dine,' said Miss Taylor.

'Then I shall not dine either,' said Muriel quickly, 'and you need not bother to give me money to buy things, for I shall only have a cup of tea too,' she declared.

'Muriel, you must not speak to me like that,' said her aunt. 'You are not to decide what you will eat and what you will not. If you do not take a proper dinner just because I go out, I shall be obliged to send you to board with the Madames.'

'I did not mean to be rude; I only meant that I should not take the trouble to make any dinner for myself; it is not worth while. I only do it for you,' explained Muriel.

'Well, please do it for yourself to-night,' said Miss Taylor.

'Where are you going, Aunt Lu?' demanded Muriel.

'Well, really, Muriel, one would think I had not the right to go out without telling you where I was going!' said her aunt rather testily.

'Oh, I don't want to know if you don't want me to,' said Muriel; 'only I can't think what you are making such a mystery about it for;' and so saying, she put on her hat, and, saying good-bye very shortly, walked out of the flat before Miss Taylor had realised that her niece had gone to school, and had taken leave of her in this impolite manner.

She stood for a moment rather irresolute, and then, putting on her hat, she followed Muriel. But when she got to the bottom of the stairs she was surprised not to see the girl, and there was no one about to ask whether she had gone out alone or whether Marthe had, as usual, met her at the door.

However, Miss Taylor felt that she should like to see

Muriel before she went to the studio, for she did not like to leave her on such bad terms. Moreover, she remembered her promise—which she thought rather foolish now—that she would speak to the Madames before she finally made up her mind to give up the tour, though it could not possibly affect her decision, she said to herself. However, even Miss Taylor, little as she knew of the Madames, felt, as many others did, that their sympathy and right way of looking at things did one good, and she liked a talk with them at any time. Besides, she wanted to give Muriel the money for shopping, so she went on to the school.

The fact was, Miss Taylor spoilt her niece woefully; and, if she did make an effort to assert herself and correct Muriel, as she had done this morning, Muriel had only to behave as she had done to make her aunt give way. Miss Taylor gave an impatient sigh at the thought of her own weakness, as she hastened her steps so as to catch Muriel up before the child reached the school, thinking as she went that her training was very bad for a girl of Muriel's character. But when she turned into the Boulevard St Germain, to her surprise she saw no sign of her niece, and concluded that the girl, in her irritation, had walked extra fast, and was out of sight. She walked on to the school all the same, and asked one of the Madames if she could see Miss Muriel Taylor.

'Certainly. Step within, mademoiselle,' said the porteress who opened the door to her, and Miss Taylor stepped into the lofty hall and waited till Madame

the directrice happened to pass along the corridor, and, seeing her, came down the marble staircase to speak to her. 'Well, Miss Taylor,' she said in excellent English, 'did you wish to speak to me?' and without waiting for an answer she led the way into her room.

'I came to speak to my niece,' said Miss Taylor. 'She went off this morning without my having made some arrangements for the day; and I should like to speak to you too, if you can spare me time.'

'About Muriel? She is a very intelligent girl, but she needs keeping in order. Do you find the task difficult?' inquired the mother superior, smiling.

'I do indeed!' said Miss Taylor with feeling, and then she unburdened herself to the good directrice. 'You see, the truth is that I have not so strong a character as Muriel, and instead of my managing her she manages me; and she does manage a great deal better than I could in many ways.' And here Miss Taylor told the tale of the dinners that Muriel cooked so well, and the clever way she went shopping. 'And the worst is that every one flatters her, and tells her how useful she is, and she is getting as conceited as possible. She ought to lead a child's life, not a woman's.'

'I see,' said the directrice thoughtfully; 'but it is better for you, is it not, to have her with you? I mean for your comfort.'

'Yes, it has been so this month, and of course I am very glad to have her; but, as it happens, it is

rather inconvenient, because I ought to go with my fellow-students to follow a course of out-of-door painting, and I must give it up. I am very glad to do it, of course,' she added hastily.

'But why must you give it up? Does it keep you longer out during the day? Because, if so, you can leave Muriel with us. We shall be delighted to have her.'

'Thank you very much; but it is not in Paris, but away to Normandy that I should go for two or three weeks, perhaps even a month. And I cannot leave her with you, much as I should wish it, for my brother has telegraphed: "Do not send Muriel to a boarding-school again." So, until I can explain matters to him, I cannot go against his express wishes.'

'No, of course not; but does he say that she is to stay with you?' asked the directrice.

'No; but I have no friends with whom I could leave her, so it comes to the same thing.'

'Still, it seems a pity to give up your work. Does Muriel know this?' inquired the directrice.

'No—oh no, I could not tell her; she would be so unhappy, and I dare say would want to stay at the flat alone, or do something self-willed,' cried Miss Taylor hastily.

The directrice shook her head. 'I am afraid you spoil your niece,' she said.

'I know I do,' acknowledged Miss Taylor, 'and that is one of the reasons that I am very sorry she came

to me. Still, here she is, and I must do my best for her; at any rate it is better than her being among strangers who do not understand her.'

The directrice did not say what she thought, which was that she did not find Muriel very difficult to understand, and that she would be better among strangers; but remarked suddenly, 'Do you like Marthe Ballanfah as a companion for your niece?'

'Yes, indeed I do; she is so bright and simple, she does Muriel good, and they incite each other to historical and other studies.'

The directrice smiled. 'So I hear, and the result has been that my whole school of boarders have insisted upon going to the Place du Temple to see the weeping-willow which is no longer there; and then on to the ancient *hôtel* of Madame de Sévigné, whence they have come back with graphic accounts of all the monsters of the Revolution, and are all crazy upon Louis XVI. needlework, and Louis XVI. designs, and Marie Antoinette fichus. But you want to see your niece, in which case I will send for her.'

So the directrice left Miss Taylor and sent Muriel to her.

The latter came in in rather a shamefaced way, for she knew that she had not been very nice, and at Miss Taylor's reproachful glance she said at once frankly, 'I'm sorry you had to come after me, Aunt Lu. I was cross, so I rushed off to get over it.'

'It was not very polite, Muriel. I wish you would not rush off the minute anything annoys you. But

never mind; I have brought the money for your dinner. Promise me that you will get something nice for yourself,' said Miss Taylor, handing Muriel the money.

'Very well. What time do you expect to be home?' asked Muriel in her usual tone, for she was not of a sulky nature, and soon got over her tempers.

'Not before eight o'clock, so don't wait for me.'

Then Miss Taylor went off, and Muriel returned to her schoolroom.

'You have a very good, unselfish aunt, Muriel. You are very fortunate. I hope you appreciate her,' said the directrice as the girl passed her with a curtsey during the morning.

'Oh yes, indeed I do!' exclaimed Muriel. 'I am sure she would tell you so if you asked her. She would miss me dreadfully if I were to go away.'

'Are you sure of that?' inquired the directrice, and then turned away.

Muriel wondered what she meant, but at that minute a girl came up to tell her that she had found a copy of a Louis XVI. chintz and was embroidering the pattern on cloth in Louis XVI. shades for a chair. 'A *real* Louis XVI. chair that mamma has, and never bothered to get covered, and now she has given it to me to reward me for taking an interest in history.'

'How lucky!' cried Marthe. 'I wish we had some Louis XVI. furniture; but ours is all Empire, and I don't think that half so pretty.—Do you, Muriel?'

'I don't know,' said Muriel, who did not know the difference between the two styles.

'Still, it is of the great Napoleon's time, so you ought to be glad to have it,' said the other girl.

'Yes, of course; but it is not so pretty, and I am not obliged to admire his furniture. I do not even like what he had at Malmaison.—You must go there, Muriel,' Marthe added, turning to the English girl.

'Oh, pray, wait till she has been to Versailles, and finished seeing all the places where Louis XVI. lived, or else she will get mixed up. I say, I wonder whether we might all go to Versailles together. It would be much more fun, wouldn't it?' cried the girl who was embroidering a Louis XVI. chair-cover.

'We will ask,' said Marthe, nodding her head. 'Mamma is coming to fetch me herself to-day, and I will ask her to beg Madame to let us make an expedition to the château of Versailles. She never refuses my mamma, because she was her best pupil,' said Marthe, nodding her head.

But when Madame Ballanfah came she was asked to go straight to the room of the directrice, and Marthe did not see her before she went.

'Was ever anything so provoking? To-morrow is a feast, and we could so well have gone; and it is the day of the *grandes eaux*, too, which would have been so lovely. Well, it cannot be helped; we must wait till another Thursday,' she decided—'unless I can persuade mamma to go back and ask Madame.'

All this time the other girls were being fetched

away, and Marthe found herself one of the last of the day-girls to be fetched. 'Mamma is having a long talk with Madame to-day,' she remarked to a teacher who came into the day-girls' waiting-room.

'Why, Marthe, you here? How is it you have not gone with madame your mother?'

'She has not gone. She is with Madame the directrice,' replied Marthe.

'But indeed she has gone. I saw her go five minutes ago,' said the teacher.

Marthe was too astonished to say anything for a moment, and then broke into voluble lamentations. 'What can mamma have been thinking about?' she cried. 'She has actually forgotten me! Well, she will remember when she gets home, it is to be hoped. At any rate, I must wait here till she comes or sends for me.' And so saying, Marthe took out a book and began to study her lesson for to-morrow.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE 'GRANDES EAUX.'

MADAME BALLANFAH, however, had not forgotten her daughter, and a message presently came from the directrice to tell Marthe that her mother would be back in half-an-hour or so to fetch her, and that she was to go meanwhile to the boarders' recreation-room and wait for her mother.

'Oh, joy!' cried the girl, for this was a great privilege, and she enjoyed herself so much with the other girls that she did not notice that an hour and a half passed before the hall-porteress came to tell her that Madame Ballanfah had come to fetch her, and was in Madame's room.

'Well, Marthe, did you think I was never coming?' inquired her mother.

'To tell you the truth, mamma, I was so occupied with a Louis XVI.'——

But Madame Ballanfah held up her hands in pretended terror. 'Please spare me, Marthe,' she cried; and, turning to the directrice, added, 'I can assure you I have heard more about that unfortunate king these last few weeks than I have heard in all my life before. Marthe would even like to turn out our furniture to have a Louis XVI. suite.'

'Oh, I know all about it,' replied the directrice. The Bon Marché is receiving large orders for wool and silks and what not of that king's period, and I expect to have no rest until all my pupils have visited all his places of residence.—Eh, what is it?—That is just what they do want?' she exclaimed, as Marthe's eyes spoke for her.

'Oh, dear Madame, if you would—that is, if they—we might just go to Versailles to-morrow; it is the *grandes eaux* [the fountains play], and we do so want to go, and Muriel has never seen any of our great fountains playing.'

'And must everything that Muriel wants be done?' inquired Madame.

'Oh, I only meant I should like to show them to her,' explained Marthe.

'Well, I have no objection. My foreign pupils will all be glad to go and visit these historical places, and it is an excellent way of impressing the stirring events of the last two centuries upon the girls.'

Marthe thanked the directrice effusively, and after arrangements had been made for her and Muriel to join the boarders and go to Versailles under the care of two teachers, Madame Ballanfah and her daughter took their departure.

'So you were not curious to know why I left you so long to-day?' inquired her mother when the two, arm-in-arm, were affectionately walking home.

'No, because at first I thought you were with

Madame, and I know you have always plenty to say to her, and afterwards I was amusing myself very well.'

'So it seems; but, as it happens, our conversation would have interested you very much. What do you say to having a companion to share your room for two or three weeks?' demanded Madame Ballanfah.

Marthe stopped short in her dismay. 'A companion?' she echoed blankly. 'Who is it? A girl? Is it Cousin Eugenie?'

Eugenie was the daughter of Monsieur Ballanfah's sister, a very spoilt child, whose visits Marthe dreaded.

'No, it is not Eugenie, but it is a girl. Try again,' said her mother.

'I can't imagine. None of my other cousins can leave their schools, and whoever it is I shall hate having her, so please don't let her come, mamma.'

'Then we had better turn into the Rue de la Montagne de St Geneviève, and tell Muriel that you do not want her,' said Madame Ballanfah.

Marthe gave a little jump of delight. 'Muriel coming to stay with us! Is it possible? Will her aunt be able to do without her?'

'Oh yes, quite well. Miss Muriel is not so important as she thinks,' said Madame Ballanfah as they walked on.

This was just the unpleasant thought that was thrusting itself upon Muriel. Madame Ballanfah had been to Miss Taylor's studio, and obtained her ready consent to the proposed visit, which, of course, the

kind directrice had arranged; and Miss Taylor had, after all, come home early to tell Muriel that she was going off on a sketching-tour with her fellow art-students.

It was with mingled feelings that Muriel heard the news. She was very glad to stay with Marthe, and in her secret heart not sorry to be relieved of her domestic duties for a time; but it hurt her pride to think that she was rather a hindrance than a help to her aunt. 'Then you want to get rid of me?' she said rather dejectedly to her aunt.

'That is not a nice way of putting it,' replied Miss Taylor. 'I want to go on a sketching-tour with my *cour;* and as Madame Ballanfah has kindly offered to receive you for two or three weeks, I have gladly accepted.'

'And if she had not offered, you would have given it up for me?' said Muriel.

And perhaps this fact had more influence upon Muriel than any reasoning would have had. After all, it was not she, who made so much fuss about what she did for her aunt, who was unselfish, but her aunt, who, without saying a word, would have given up an important course of study in order to stay with her. At last Muriel began to see that she had made a mistake in coming to Paris just because she was unhappy in London, and it was the first step towards a less self-sufficient frame of mind.

However, there was not much time for melancholy thoughts, for if Miss Taylor went at all she must start

next day, which was the reason Madame Ballanfah had hastened to make the suggestion, and they had both to pack and be off the next morning before nine o'clock.

Muriel felt a little sad and lonely when her aunt said good-bye to her; but Angelique was in the highest of spirits, and it was impossible to do anything but laugh at her nonsense. She appeared in the Taylors' flat at intervals of two minutes to make suggestions as to what Louise Taylor should take; and when Muriel had told her for the tenth time that they had packed that particular article, she came back again with anxious face. 'I have fortunately thought of something most important for such a tour that you are sure to have forgotten, being English,' she cried earnestly.

'What?' asked Muriel, taken in for the minute.

'Soap,' said Angelique, and disappeared before the two could reply.

Then, when Muriel went into the little room to shake her for her impudence, she found her taking farewell of all her frescoes. 'Ah, dear friend,' she was saying to a caricature of an Englishman, 'I beg of you do not *ennuie* yourself in our dull city where there are no fogs nor Basses nor such delights'——

'Basses! What do you mean, mademoiselle?' inquired Muriel.

'It is what all Englishmen drink. But do not interrupt me; I have much to say still,' declared Angelique.

'Then you must leave it unsaid, unless you wish to lose the train, mademoiselle. *Tiens*, what an infant it is!' exclaimed Madame Laval, coming up with her husband to take the portmanteaus.

'Why, Angelique, you have a crown on your bag! What does that mean?' inquired Muriel.

'That I am an angel, and have already got my crown,' retorted Angelique quickly before Madame Laval, who looked at her, could say anything.

Then, the two cabs being at the door, they took their places, Angelique with Louise Taylor, and Madame Laval with Muriel, and were just driving off in different directions, when Angelique, who saw a tear in the corner of Muriel's eye, stopped her cab, and leaning forward, cried, 'I must go back and fetch something which Miss Taylor has forgotten.'

'Let me go! What is it?' cried Muriel eagerly, while the two cabs waited.

'Soap!' cried Angelique, and gave the signal to drive on, while Muriel went off with Madame Laval, laughing merrily.

Muriel did not know Monsieur Ballanfah, and was afraid that he might not be so nice as his wife and daughter; but when she met Marthe at the door of her flat, and was greeted with such delight by her, she felt comforted.

'Come, Muriel; come and see our room. I have made the room so that you have exactly half of everything. Tell me, is it like an English bedroom?'

'No,' said Muriel; 'but it is very nice.'

'What is different?' inquired Marthe. 'There is the same furniture, isn't there?'

'Yes; but that is not quite the same; it looks very French, I think. It's the extras that are not here,' said Muriel looking round it.

'Well, there is one thing that you have not got,' said Marthe, and she showed with great triumph a small chair with curved legs and covered with tapestry all blue ribbon and tiny flowers. 'Look, it is Louis XVI.'

'Fancy, I never knew that was his pattern! We do have that in England, but I have never had it in my room before,' she added.

'Mamma got it for me. She said perhaps it would satisfy me, and I have put it near your bed. That is yours, with the pink curtains and canopy Louis XVI. style, because you admire him so much,' said Marthe.

'I don't know that I like him so much, or rather I might not have liked him if he had not been guillotined, and behaved so nobly in all his troubles, and been so brave in prison. But thank you for the chair and curtains.'

'And now I have great news for you. We are going with all the elder girls to Versailles. We shall fill a whole tram. Think what fun! So, if you are ready, we will go to the school, for we are to start in half-an-hour,' said Marthe.

Muriel was ready, and an hour later they were well on their way to Versailles, swaying and jolting in the

long double tram along the bank of the Seine, past the fortifications, and across the river.

'Look, here we are at Sèvres, and there is the great manufactory where they make Sèvres china; we can go and see it one day,' said Marthe as they passed the gates of the park of St Cloud, and saw the factory of the famous china through the trees. 'You have heard of Palissy, the great inventor of Palissy ware? Well, you will see his china there.'

'I shall have to stop here years to see all there is to see, and yet the guide-books say you can see all the sights of Paris in a fortnight,' said Muriel.

'A fortnight!' cried the girls indignantly. 'Why, it would take that to see all there is to see at Versailles properly.'

'Oh, would it really?' cried Muriel disbelievingly. 'How can a château take a fortnight to see?'

'You wait till you see it,' said Marthe. 'There are two hundred rooms or more, and most of them have beautiful pictures in them; and then there is the park, and the Little Trianon (or mock farm where Marie Antoinette used to play at being a milkmaid with the ladies of her Court), and the Great Trianon, where'——

'Now, Marthe, do not act guide; we shall have enough of that with the real guide, and we shall remember better what he says,' suggested Madame Vincent, who knew that they would have to listen to explanations for some hours.

And so they had. Remorselessly the guide took

them through *salle* after *salle*, till Muriel, who did not understand all he said, and was too ignorant of French history to know all the people he mentioned, felt her brain whirl, and looked so tired that one of the teachers told Marthe to take her into the park.

'Oh, but, madame, we have not seen Marie Antoinette's rooms, nor the staircase of honour where the Guards were killed standing at their posts so as to give her time to escape.—You see how noble Frenchmen can be!' observed Marthe to Muriel.

'Well, it shows how cruel they can be too, for the others wanted to kill her,' said one of the English boarders.

'Sh! sh! no quarrelling, please. Come and see the mirror in Marie Antoinette's Salon of Reception, where she saw herself reflected headless,' said the teacher. 'She said it was a presentiment.'

'Oh madame, is that true?' inquired one of the girls.

'That she saw herself headless? Yes; but of course it was not a presentiment. You come and stand here and you will see the same,' she replied.

And so they did all of them, to their surprise and amusement, with which was mixed a little feeling of uncanniness.

However, the teacher in charge decided that the girls had had enough of the château, and after they had seen the great ballroom where Queen Victoria opened the ball with Louis XVIII., she took them away just as the guide was telling how in those days any one might come in and watch the king

and queen at supper, and how magnificent were their banquets.

'After all this information, it is as well to wash it down with some water,' said one of the girls, as they made their way to the fountains. And then with one consent they gave a cry of delight at the sight of the wonderful fountains all in full play, one called the pyramid especially delighting them.

'Muriel, can't you hear the crowd of half-starving men and women roaring and howling round the château on that dreadful day when they came from Paris to see Louis XVI., and make him grant their demands? I can,' said Marthe.

'No,' said the unimaginative Muriel; 'but I understand that part of history better now that I see this magnificent château.'

'Well, I can. Instead of the fountains I seem to hear their yells,' said one of the girls.

'Then you must be going to be ill, or something,' interrupted another girl. Whereupon they all laughed, and went on to visit the Trianons.

'Which are far too much to attempt in one day,' said the teacher; 'but as we have not too much time for sight-seeing, we must do the best we can.'

And so they hurried through the park, with its *bosquets* full of groups of statuary, and saw the pretty Little Trianon.

'Madame, do you know how long we have been in this château and its park?' inquired a dull-looking French girl. And when the teacher professed her

ignorance, she said with great solemnity, 'Seven hours.' There were renewed gasps and expressions of weariness at this piece of information.

'Well, that is as long as the park is open,' said the teacher cheerfully as she led the way to the station, for everybody was so tired that it was decided to go back by the shortest route. 'And now I should like to know what you girls think of the wonderful park and palace you have seen to-day. What are your impressions?—You, Marthe, tell me what has impressed you most.'

'Oh, the water—the fountains,' said Marthe.

'What an idea! Any one can make them any day,' cried another girl in disgust.

'I liked the pretty little dairy and thatched cottages where Marie Antoinette used to amuse herself,' said another.

'How strange that none of you seem to be struck by the size of the place, or by the Salle of Mirrors, or by the pictures! What do the foreigners think?' the teacher inquired, turning to two English girls who were sitting together.

'Am I to say what really struck me?' inquired one of them; and on being assured that she might, she said with a laugh, 'Well, I was most struck with the greatness of Queen Victoria.'

This was considered the most extraordinary reply of all, and the girl was called upon to explain herself.

'What can you mean by being struck with your

Queen's greatness in one of our palaces?' inquired a French girl.

They were all very tired, but this statement had had the effect of waking them all up.

'Well, everywhere we went, in the great ballroom, in the Trianon, in the bedroom, when the guide spoke of the Queen everybody pressed forward to listen—Americans, French, Russians—and looked to see the place where she had been. That is true greatness. Not one of your kings would cause so much interest in another country.'

There was not a dissentient voice when the girl said this.

'After that I am afraid to ask any more impressions,' said the teacher; 'but I should like to know what Muriel is thinking of it all.—Have you enjoyed it, Muriel?'

'Oh yes, I have enjoyed myself very much indeed,' said Muriel eagerly.

'And what have you learnt?' inquired the Sister.

Muriel hesitated for a moment, and then laughed.

'What! are you going to tell us that you have learnt something about English history?' cried the girls.

'No, no, I wasn't going to say that,' said Muriel; but she did not say what she had been on the point of saying.

However, the girls became all the more eager to hear what she really thought. These foreigners were so *drôle*, they could never imagine that any history

could be so important as their own, nor any kings so interesting as their own; though, of course, what they said about the great Queen was true, for she was an exception. So they insisted upon Muriel telling them what she had learnt, or what she thought about what she had heard.

'I expect you will all think me very stupid; but I have not learnt anything at all,' said Muriel, and then joined in the laugh that followed.

'But that is impossible! You are only joking. Tell us truly; we shall not be offended,' they urged her.

'It is the truth. I have heard so much, and seen so much, that I can't remember a single thing; and if I had to write a composition upon Versailles I simply couldn't do it. I should begin: "Versailles is a very beautiful palace, situated outside Paris, with a large park and beautiful fountains."'

'There it is after all! You have only remembered the fountains, which means that they were the things which impressed you most. Alas for French history!' said the teacher.

'No indeed, madame; I have been impressed by lots of things. Now that I come to think of it, there was the Salle of Mirrors.'

'Of course, because Queen Victoria opened the ball there,' said a French girl.

'No, no, not at all. And there were some beautiful pictures, one of poor Marie Antoinette and her family, the Princess Royale and the pretty little dauphin; and that one of Napoleon in a cocked hat, with his

arms folded, that we have so many copies of in England; and a ceiling by Le Brun, and some fine battle-pieces. Oh, and some groups of sculpture in the park—one especially in the little garden called the English garden—I noticed them especially.'

'Ah, there speaks the artist's niece! Well, you have taken away some ideas with you, all of you; and, after all, you may be forgiven for having a little historical indigestion after trying to see Versailles and its park in one day,' said the teacher.

'Of seven hours,' said the French girl who had made this remark before.

'That is the impression that Antoinette has taken away,' the others cried, laughing.

Antoinette only laughed. 'I have the impression that I am very tired,' she said as she sank with evident relief into her seat in the train.

And this was a very general impression.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

IT was so strange to wake up next morning in the pretty French bedroom, with its curtained bed, and, peeping round the drapery which made an alcove of each bed, to see the black eyes of Marthe looking out from her bed as she nodded in her quick way a greeting to her friend.

'I have been wanting to talk to you for ever so long, but I was afraid you were still asleep. Is it comfortable your bed?' she asked.

'Yes, indeed it is; and it made me have such wonderful dreams,' said Muriel, 'that I half-expected them to be true.'

'That must have been papa's tales of the Revolution,' replied Marthe. 'I wonder I did not dream too; but I slept like a spinner, as you say.'

'I! I don't say that. I have never heard of such an expression,' said Muriel. 'Do you mean a spider?'

'No, no. I mean that thing you spin,' explained Marthe.

'Oh, a top!' said Muriel. 'But it was the Revolution that I dreamt about, so perhaps it was monsieur's conversation.'

'That was what mamma told him, that he was speaking on too exciting subjects. I shall tell him you had frightful dreams in consequence.'

'But I had not; they were very interesting. I dreamt that I saw Marie Antoinette, and she was dressed just as she is in that picture in Madame de Sévigné's *hôtel*, in that old black dress, and a white fichu, and she spoke so nicely to me; and when I said that I would try to get her out of prison she told me that it would be no good, for so many brave men had tried and only lost their lives in trying to do the same thing; and she looked so pale and gentle, and yet so dignified.'

Marthe was sitting bolt-upright and listening with all her ears to Muriel. 'Did she really? What a wonderful dream! What language did she speak?'

'I—don't remember,' said Muriel doubtfully. 'Somehow, I never thought of her being French.'

'But she was not French, though she spoke it quite well of course; she was Austrian,' interrupted Marthe.

'Oh, to be sure. I forget these things; but, anyhow, I don't think I shall forget anything about Marie Antoinette after this dream. I wish I could find some way of fixing French literature in my head. I believe I am getting on with French history; but the thing that has helped me most is the needlework of the different Louis—XIV. and XV. (Louis XVI., of course, I know now), and poor little Louis XVII. who only reigned in prison; and then the

Empire style, which you don't like. I never thought when people wore those dresses that they were named after Napoleon's Empire. But why are dresses named Directoire, Marthe?'

'*Ma foi!* I do not know. You must ask papa,' said Marthe.

Monsieur was a professor at the University, and turned out to be a very kind and good-natured man, and Muriel was not in the least afraid of him; but she did not think she would dare to ask him questions, so Marthe asked him that evening.

Monsieur Ballanfah never showed his astonishment at any ignorance, and if a question, however simple, was asked him, he took as much trouble to answer it as if it were a most important one. So when Marthe asked him what the Directoire style took its name from he replied, 'From *le Directoire*, the Republican Government formed in 1795, which lasted till 1799. The members were all dressed in a costume something like the ancient robe or toga of the Romans.'

'Oh, how funny they must have looked!' cried Marthe.

'Not so funny as the ladies sometimes look who copy them,' observed her father.

'They must have been young men fond of dressing up,' suggested Marthe.

'On the contrary, all the members were obliged to be forty years old at least,' said Monsieur Ballanfah.

'Fancy that, Muriel! Now, will you remember that part of history?'

'Yes,' said Muriel. 'That was the time poor little Louis XVII. was really king; and then came Louis XVIII., wasn't it?' inquired Muriel.

'No; then came the great Napoleon,' said the Professor.

'Oh yes, of course; I forgot,' said Muriel apologetically.

'You need not be ashamed of not knowing our history. I am sure I could not tell you as much about English history, and what I could tell is very likely wrong,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'Yes. I should like to burn a good many of the histories in use in some schools. Ah, I see Miss Muriel looks as if she agreed with me,' her husband said with a smile.

'It is only some things they say about England,' said Muriel, 'that I don't think are quite'——

'Correct?' suggested the Professor. 'Very likely not. For that matter, the history which is quite correct has yet to be written, and I fear that will be never,' he added as he rose from the dinner-table.

'We must be quiet this evening,' said madame when her husband had left the dining-room, 'because the Professor has to write a *conférence* or lecture which he is giving to-morrow. That is the worst of flats—one hears any noise made in any of the rooms.'

'I want to write to Aunt Lu,' said Muriel.

'That is all right, then; and I will write my diary, observed Marthe. 'I have not written it for more than a week.'

The two girls took their writing materials into the dining-room, and silence reigned.

Muriel's letter seemed to cause her a good deal of trouble to compose. At last she began, and, once decided what to say, she scribbled away so fast that Marthe could do nothing but watch her, and, truth to tell, was not a little curious to know what Muriel was saying to her aunt.

Perhaps she did not mean to do so; but they were sitting very close together, and Muriel wrote a large, bold hand, and Marthe let her eye glance at the letter and caught sight of her own name.

If it had been Muriel she would instantly have moved away; but Marthe was not quite so honourable, and her curiosity got the better of her conscience, and she looked again to see what Muriel was saying about her. She felt sure it would only be something nice, for Muriel was very happy with them, and had said so; but she seemed to be thinking so deeply about what she was saying that Marthe wondered what it was, so she looked, and this is what she saw: 'Do you think I ought to tell Marthe? I don't want to'—— that was all, for at that moment Muriel looked up, and Marthe hastily turned her eyes away.

Muriel looked at her friend in doubt for a moment; but to look at another person's letter would have been impossible to her, and she could not think that it would be possible to Marthe, so she went on writing, and, as Marthe just then moved away, she concluded

that the latter had seen a word and moved away in case she should see any more.

Perhaps this was partly why Marthe had moved away; but it was also because what she had read had disturbed her. What could Muriel have to tell her that she did not want to tell? In vain Marthe puzzled her head to know what it was. The idea that her friend had a secret from her annoyed her dreadfully, and she felt less friendly to Muriel. She made up her mind that it was something to do with school, and then an idea flashed across her mind: it was that Muriel had begun to like one of the other girls better than her; that was why she had walked beside one of the English girls at Versailles. She had said it was so that the girl might translate what the guide was saying to them, but she had sat beside her in the train coming home. Yes, the more Marthe thought of it, the more certain she felt that she had discovered what it was that Muriel thought she ought to tell her (Marthe), but did not want to tell. Well, it was only natural. Of course she would like her fellow-countrywoman better than a French girl; but, all the same, Marthe felt that it was hard. She had been Muriel's first friend, and had fetched her and taken her back from school, and this girl had not taken any notice of her till the day they went to Versailles; and now, of course, it was ended—their friendship. Here Marthe, having worked herself up into a 'state,' could bear it no longer, and began to cry.

Muriel did not notice that Marthe was crying—for the latter was sitting in an arm-chair behind her—till she heard a sob, and, looking round, saw Marthe sobbing violently. Now, there were only two people to whom Muriel was demonstrative; one was her Aunt Lu and the other was her father. To the rest of the world Muriel was friendly but nothing more. So when she saw Marthe in such evident trouble she was horribly embarrassed, and did not know what to do. She sat there for a minute, looking most unhappy, and then said, 'Don't cry, Marthe; please don't cry.'

But the fact that Muriel did not rush and embrace her, as a French girl would have done, was proof-positive to Marthe that her idea was a true one, and that Muriel, much as she regretted it, did not care for her any more, so that Muriel's feeble attempt at comforting her failed to have the desired effect, and Marthe only cried the harder.

Here Madame Ballanfah, who had heard the sounds of distress, came in from the next room, and, hastening to Marthe, cried, 'But, my dear, what is the matter? Surely you have not been quarrelling?' and she looked at Muriel, who stood looking the picture of misery, and then at Marthe. But neither of the girls answering, she became impatient, and, turning to Muriel, said, 'Come, Muriel, can you tell me what is the matter? Have you disagreed?'

'I don't know anything about it. I have been writing my letter, and suddenly I heard Marthe

crying,' said Muriel, who herself would very much have liked to know what was the matter.

'What made you cry, Marthe? Are you ill?' inquired her mother.

'No; it is because Muriel does not care for me any more,' said Marthe between her sobs.

'Me! I!' cried Muriel in surprise.

'Did she tell you so?' demanded Madame Ballanfah.

'No. I am sure of it,' said Marthe.

Madame Ballanfah looked at Muriel's face of amazement, and concluded that it was some foolish jealousy on the part of Marthe, so she said rather sharply, 'Now, Marthe, that is enough; you will give yourself a headache, and you are annoying your friend. You must not say such things; it is not at all kind.'

'But I am so unhappy, because I like her so much,' said Marthe.

'Then you do not take a very good way to show your affection by accusing her of not liking you,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'But do you really, Muriel?' began Marthe.

'Now, Marthe, I will not have any more discussion on the subject. Of course she likes you, and if she does not, you cannot force her to like you, and you are not going the right way to make her like you. Besides, that is a very foolish question to ask. Do you suppose Muriel would tell you if she did not like you?—You would not like to say such a thing, would you, Muriel?' Madame Ballanfah inquired of the English girl.

'No, I know that,' Marthe remarked in a dejected tone, and neither her mother nor Muriel knew what she meant; but though she dried her tears, she remained very quiet and sad all the rest of the evening. Muriel could not cheer her up at all; and as she had no idea that it was those unfortunate words that Marthe had read in the letter which had caused all the trouble, the two were not likely to come to an understanding.

What Muriel had written to her aunt was not at all what Marthe had imagined. The fact of the matter was that Marthe had said one day that a girl had run away from school, and 'of course we could have nothing to do with her after that,' she had added, and the remark had remained unpleasantly in Muriel's memory. She wondered whether Marthe would have anything to do with her if she knew that she (Muriel) had run away from her school, and whether she ought to tell her.

This was the question she had asked her aunt; but Marthe had only seen the words: 'Do you think I ought to tell Marthe? I don't want to,' and she had not seen the rest of the sentence—which would have reassured her on the subject of Muriel's affection for her—'because I am afraid that she will not like me so much, and I do so like her.'

The next day Marthe was not a bit like herself—that is to say, with Muriel, whom she avoided at recreation-time. At first Muriel did not notice it, for the English girl Maud, who had talked to her at

Versailles, came and walked with her, and the two naturally found a good deal to say to each other; but when she went in to her class, and Muriel turned to Marthe, the latter walked away arm-in-arm with another French girl, and seemed to be talking so fast and to be so interested in what she was saying that Muriel, after approaching them and finding that they took no notice, turned away and sauntered off to another part of the recreation-ground.

How it came about is not certain, but all at once it occurred to Muriel that the change in Marthe had begun just after she had looked at the letter Muriel was writing to her aunt, and the dreadful suspicion came into her mind that Marthe had seen what she had written, and that was what had made her cry. It was a very disagreeable thought, and Muriel tried to put it out of her head; but the more she decided not to think of it the more the thought would come back.

All the rest of the morning and all the afternoon she found herself thinking of it. The only thing that puzzled her was why Marthe had accused her of not liking Marthe any more, and this Muriel explained by deciding that it was only because she did not want to say that she herself had changed, and that it was to show Muriel that she did not wish to be friends.

Of course this was not very straightforward; but then to read the letter was a very dishonourable thing to do, and Muriel thought that a person who would do the one thing would do the other.

On the way home Marthe was no more friendly than before, and at last Muriel made up her mind to say something, so in her straightforward way she said to Marthe, when the two were in their room that evening, 'Marthe, did you see what I wrote to my aunt about last night?'

'I—I saw a few words,' stammered Marthe, who would not tell a direct falsehood.

'And that is what has changed you?' demanded Muriel coldly.

'No; it is you who are changed,' cried Marthe.

Muriel gave an impatient 'Pshaw!' and saying, with a curl of her lip, 'I did not think you were so dishonourable!' she turned away and said no more.

But that night it was Muriel who cried herself very quietly to sleep.

Meanwhile her aunt, who had been cheered by Muriel's letters telling of her kind reception by the Ballanfahs, was enjoying her tour, her mind quite at rest about her young niece.

The girl-students lodged two or three together in the country hotels; but Miss Taylor had told Angelique that she meant to try to find some quiet lodgings. 'I dislike hotels and noise,' she had said.

'I don't think you will find the hotels noisy in this little town; and I know of one which is very quiet and old-fashioned, with a nice old landlady, where you could go. I had meant to go there myself'—— said Angelique, and stopped here, for she was not sure that Miss Taylor wanted to chum with her.

But the English girl replied hastily, 'I should like to come too, if you think it so nice.'

'Very well, we will go there straight from the station,' said Angelique, getting down her bag, for they were nearly at their destination.

Miss Taylor was not in the least inquisitive by nature, but she could not help glancing at the brown leather bag Angelique lifted down from the rack. It was very shabby, though it had evidently been a good one in its time; but that was not what attracted Louise Taylor's attention to it; it was the 'crown,' as Muriel had called it, but which her aunt knew was a coronet, that the English student noticed. If it had been alone she would have thought that Angelique had bought it second-hand; but under it were the initials A. de S., and Louise remembered that once in the studio her fellow-students had laughingly called her the Aristocrat, which Angelique had resented in her usual impish way by some trick; and when asked why she had a 'de' before her name, said that was nothing nowadays, for any one could and did put it—which was true.

So Miss Taylor, wondering rather at Angelique's taking the trouble to do such a thing, concluded that it meant nothing, and, the matter not interesting her, it passed from her mind. And now, as Angelique, in spite of having noticed her glance of curiosity, said nothing, Miss Taylor asked no question.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### KING ARTHUR OF THE ROUND TABLE A FRENCHMAN!

MISS TAYLOR and Mademoiselle de Ségur were sitting at dinner in the little garden outside the quiet country inn—for, if possible, the French have all their meals in the open air in the warm weather—when Muriel's letter was brought by the kindly landlady.

The young aunt read it with knitted brows, and her companion, without seeming to take much notice, asked carelessly, 'Is that Muriel, and is she enjoying herself?'

'Yes, and she sends her love to you; but she asks my advice about something that rather puzzles me,' replied Miss Taylor.

'Can I help to unpuzzle you?' inquired Angelique; and then Miss Taylor told Angelique of Muriel's doubts.

But Angelique had no doubt at all. 'Of course she must not tell her. Dear me, why can't women hold their tongues? Half the trouble in the world comes from women's tongues,' said Angelique vehemently.

But Miss Taylor was not altogether pleased with

this advice. 'Muriel is not a woman, to begin with, and I would rather have her too frank than too reticent; and if Marthe asked her the question straight out I should insist upon her telling the truth,' she declared.

Mademoiselle de Ségur shrugged her shoulders. 'You are getting upon a plane too high for me,' she observed; 'but if you wish Muriel to tell Marthe of that foolish escapade, you wish her to tell the whole school, I suppose, and you wish her to have to leave at once also?'

'What do you mean? Oh, that Marthe would repeat it? I hope not; but if she did, the Madames know it, for I told them, of course.'

'If Marthe did, the tale would get exaggerated, and Muriel would have to leave the school, for the other girls would be shocked. To tell the truth, I—who do not find many things to shock me—was shocked when I heard it. Oh yes, we French are shocked sometimes, though I have done much the same thing myself; but then I was older, and—I have paid for that folly. *Enfin*, mademoiselle, you must do as you think right; but take a French girl's word for it, the French do not understand English independence, and will not let their daughters mix with poor Muriel if they hear this foolish tale.' And then Angelique got up from the table, and Louise Taylor heard her gaily arguing with the landlady about the chicken they had just eaten, which she declared should never have been killed, but put under

a case as a curiosity for having remained a chicken for so many years.

Miss Taylor answered the letter that same evening, and said: 'There is not the least need to tell Marthe of the foolish way in which you left your English school. It is not the same thing for an English girl as it would be for a French girl, and you ran to the only home you had. Besides, Madame Ballanfah knows all about it and you, so do not talk of that any more.'

The next morning it was Muriel who was reserved with Marthe, while the latter, on the contrary, would gladly have forgotten all about the affair. It was not in Marthe's character to bear ill-will to any one for long, and if she had not forgotten Muriel's letter, at all events she was ready to be friends again, and forget about the English girl who she imagined had taken her place. So she greeted Muriel in a very friendly tone the moment she saw that the English girl was awake.

'Good-morning,' said Muriel, and said no more. She had a headache from crying, and she felt sore and angry with Marthe for having read her letter, and so the day passed very uncomfortably.

Madame Ballanfah noticed this, but decided to take no notice directly, and trusted to the storm in a tea-cup blowing over.

Muriel sighed when her aunt's letter was given to her at lunch-time. 'If Marthe had not been so dishonourable neither of us would be so unhappy,' she

said to herself. However, her aunt's letter restored her self-respect a little, and she decided to try to be the same as usual; and if Marthe chose to be unpleasant because she had been foolish, why, she would take no more notice of her.

After this the two became more friendly, and outwardly there was not much difference in their manner to each other; but 'it will never be the same,' said Muriel, who had never liked a girl before, and was deeply disappointed in Marthe; and 'She tries to like me because she is so nice, but she can't really; it is only a pretence,' said Marthe.

However, it was a very good pretence, and the two went on with it; and there was not much time to brood over troubles real or imaginary, for the yearly examinations were coming on, and the yearly prize-giving, for which there were endless rehearsals, in which, even if they did not take part, they took a great interest—Marthe because she had to assist, and Muriel because she had never seen anything like it before.

Monsieur Ballanfah, too, arrived one day at lunch with the news that there were some lectures to be given to young people on French literature.

'Oh,' cried Marthe, 'do let us go, papa; Muriel does so want to!'

'Seeing that no one knows about these lectures but the Professors, I do not understand how Miss Muriel can have heard of them. I fancy it is Marthe who wants to go,' he replied dryly.

'*Moi!* Not at all—that is to say, I shall like to go with Muriel; but it is Muriel who said the other day that she wished she could find some way of making French literature enter into her head; I mean'—as the others protested at this way of talking of Muriel's head—'I mean of fixing it in her memory. She said she mixed up Racine and Corneille.—Didn't you, Muriel?'

'Yes,' acknowledged Muriel, 'I thought it was Racine who wrote the *Cid;* but I know now that it was Corneille.'

'It is not a great mistake; they were both authors of tragedies, and lived in the seventeenth century; but it may help you to remember Racine if you know that his best work was written for schoolgirls of Saint-Cyr, at Madame de Maintenon's request.'

'I did not know that,' said Marthe. 'What was it?'

'*Athalie* and *Esther,*' replied her father. 'I fancy they sometimes recite scenes from *Esther* at your school?'

Marthe looked very comically at Muriel for a moment, and then said, 'Yes, I remember now. I am learning a scene from *Esther* for the prize-giving.'

'Really, I don't know what the heads of you girls are like—sieves, I think. It is quite natural for Muriel not to remember our French writers; but you, Marthe, might know Racine's great tragedies,' said her mother.

'*Eh bien,* if you let me go to these lectures I shall know,' was Marthe's reply, not in the least abashed at her ignorance.

'If the hour suits I think it would be a good thing,' observed Madame Ballanfah, who, like most French mothers, took a great interest in her daughter's education, and encouraged every attempt at culture.

So it was decided that Madame Ballanfah should take the two girls to the lectures on literature for young people at the Sorbonne; and Marthe, in a state of great excitement, started off to be a 'student at the University,' as she announced.

Muriel had taken a note-book to write down interesting facts; and Marthe had at first intended to do the same, but finally left hers at home. 'You see, I shall have your book to go by, and I can be listening while you are writing,' she explained.

'Idle little girl!' said her mother, laughing, 'you just want Muriel to do the work while you enjoy yourself.'

'Oh, but Marthe will know all the people they talk about, and I shall perhaps not know anything more than their names,' said Muriel humbly.

'Never mind, I will tell you all about them,' said Marthe as they turned in at the chief entrance of the Sorbonne, at which Muriel exclaimed, 'Why, I thought this was a church!'

'Well, so it is,' said Marthe as they entered the building across the quadrangle. 'Look, here are tombs—Richelieu—Cardinal Richelieu,' she explained in case Muriel should not know. 'There is a story about it.—What was it, mamma? Something about Alexandre Lenoir dying to save it.'

'No, no, Marthe, you must not teach Muriel wrong. Alexandre Lenoir was a great architect and lover of art, and at the Revolution fought hard to prevent the people in their madness from destroying all the beautiful monuments in Paris; and this tomb was considered very fine, so he stood before it to protect it from the mob, and got wounded. Think how he must have loved art!'

'I knew he did something, and at any rate he was ready to die,' observed Marthe as they went into the *salle* where the *conférence* (as it is called in France) was to be held.

'I know about Richelieu because of a book called *Under the Red Hat*,' said Muriel, who did not wish her friends to think her more ignorant than she was.

The lecturer was fortunately a Professor who understood lecturing to young people, and made what he had to say very interesting; and, as it happened, it was Muriel who knew more about his subject than Marthe, to the surprise of the latter.

After an introduction, which Muriel did not quite understand, she heard the remark, 'exploits of Arthur of the *Table Ronde*.' Muriel had only been a short while at school, it will be remembered; but she had been well educated at home, and had read a great deal, and among other poems had read Tennyson's, and she knew all about Arthur, as she thought, so she listened with interest to what the lecturer had to say about English poetry, when it dawned upon her that Arthur was not an Englishman, but a Frenchman—a

Breton! She was not sure that she was pleased to hear this. At all events, she took no notes.

'But, Muriel, what have you?' demanded Marthe. 'You have made no notes! And just this morning I did not know a single person of whom they spoke. It is very annoying! Now we shall neither of us know anything about it when papa questions us this evening, and perhaps he will say that we need not go again,' protested Martha.

'I can tell you all the names. There were Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table—Merlin, Lancelot, and Enid, and'——

'But, then, you do know some French literature! I thought you said you only knew about half-a-dozen names, and here you know all about our early poetry,' exclaimed Madame Ballanfah.

'When I learnt them they were English poems, and all those people were English people,' said Muriel, laughing; 'and it was only this morning that I heard that they were Breton. I thought it was in Cornwall they went in search of the Holy Grail;' and Muriel did not look overjoyed at the discovery.

'Ah, you see your books make mistakes also,' said Marthe rather triumphantly. 'Perhaps if we go on we shall find that more of your poets are Frenchmen. Suppose we found that Shakespeare was, for example,' she cried, clapping her hands.

'Oh, that 's quite impossible!' replied Muriel sharply, this idea not pleasing her as much as it did Marthe.

'Well, I have heard that there is some doubt,' began

Marthe, who had heard at her father's table some discussion on an article as to whether Shakespeare's plays had been written by him or not.

'There is no doubt that they were written by an Englishman,' said Madame Ballanfah when Marthe began to explain this to Muriel, for she saw that Muriel did not like this idea.

'Did you know before this morning that most of your fables are not French at all?' inquired Muriel, who thought she would show Marthe that she need not be too puffed up about Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

'But they are.—Are they not, mamma?' cried Marthe indignantly.

'I am afraid you have not been attending to the lecture, Marthe, or you would have heard the Professor say that they came—a great many of them at least—from the East.'

'Oh, well, the stupid fables, they do not matter; everybody knows that ours is the richest literature in the world,' said Marthe.

'Marthe,' said her mother gravely; and Marthe in a moment went to the other side of her mother, where Muriel was walking, and, taking her arm, said, 'It was only a joke, Muriel. You have a very fine literature too, and of course your Shakespeare is the greatest play-writer in the world; but come, let us amuse ourselves. I have a headache from sitting two hours in that hot room. I am not sure that I shall be able to support it again, and he only talks of old

poets that we have not to learn about at school, so it is no aid to me at all.'

'Suppose, then, we go and take *goûter* in the Luxembourg Gardens, and have some fresh air?' suggested Madame Ballanfah.

Needless to say, her two companions agreed with delight, and they crossed the Boulevard St Michel and went into the Luxembourg Gardens instead of going home. Here the band of the Republican Guards was playing, and the three sat under the trees and listened to it. Or, rather, Muriel and Madame Ballanfah did, but Marthe was soon off and playing *ballon* with a little girl of her acquaintance whom she saw among the numberless children in the park, for Marthe was very childish at times.

Marthe came back breathless after an exciting game with a large *ballon* which she had kept out of the reach of the other child for some minutes, and said to Muriel, 'It is so amusing! Mamma must buy us two *ballons* at the Louvre to play with, and we will see which can keep it up the longest—eh, Muriel?'

'It's too hot,' replied Muriel evasively, for she did not like to say that she was too big to play such baby-games.

'Ah, *par exemple*, and you play tennis when it is far hotter! It is just that you are too literary. Well, come and see all those great women whose statues are all along this alley; that will perhaps interest you,' said Marthe, trying to draw Muriel with her.

'No; stop and listen to the music, Marthe. I am not a bit literary,' replied Muriel, resisting all attempts to take her away from her cool place.

'There is a statue of an English lady called Mary Queen of Scots,' said Marthe.

'Is there?' inquired Muriel, getting up.

'There, I knew it! She would not move for fifty French heroines; but for one English lady, *pouf!* she comes at once,' exclaimed Marthe.

'She is not an Englishwoman, as it happens,' said Muriel, laughing, 'and I only came because you wanted to so much.'

'Ah, ah!' cried Marthe, disbelieving.

'And because she is a very beautiful woman, and I would like to see a statue of her,' Muriel declared as she walked along by Marthe in the direction of the alley bordered by great women, mostly queens. Arrived at the statue of Mary Queen of Scots, she stopped short in disappointment. 'She was more beautiful than that!' she remarked.

'Well, never mind her. I only wanted you to come for a walk; it is so dull to sit still for so long,' observed Marthe, who had not been sitting still at all, it will be observed.

Then they went home, and found Professor Ballanfah, to whom Marthe cried out before he had time to say anything, 'Papa, do not ask me anything about the lecture, for it was all about old people that one does not learn about now.'

'Indeed?' he replied dryly; 'that is news to me.'

'Yes indeed, only legends and fables,' said Marthe in a disparaging tone.

'I thought it very interesting,' said her father very quietly.

'What! you were there, papa? I thought you would be too busy to go to children's lectures. It did not interest me much.'

'No, so I saw; but if you had listened you might have found it not so dry as you thought. But as you preferred to stare all round the room and at the hats of your neighbours, I am not surprised that you do not wish to be asked any questions about the lecture.'

'If I had known you were there'—— said Marthe, nodding her head.

'And I expect you were not pleased to find your King Arthur claimed by us?' remarked the Professor to Muriel.

'I was surprised,' replied Muriel, 'but I was interested too.'

'Very well, I will try to be interested too; but Muriel can attend much harder than I,' said the volatile Marthe with a sigh; at which they all laughed, and her mother called her a lazy child.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A SCHOOL PROMENADE.

IT was only natural that Muriel should like to talk with the other English girls at school; and, though she had never liked any girl before she met Marthe, that was simply because, living at home with only grown-up people as companions, she had nothing in common with the girls she met; but here it was quite another matter.

In the first place, they were at school, and at school in a foreign country, and this drew them together; and, secondly, Muriel had introduced a love of art into the school, and the other English girls, who wished to know Paris in the way her aunt was teaching Muriel to know it, used to talk to her about the places they passed. In fact, Muriel was much in demand on walks as a companion, for she knew the streets round the old Rue St Geneviève well from having gone down them with Miss Taylor.

So the next day the school went for a walk the English girl Maud beckoned Muriel to her, and said, 'Come, Muriel, I want you to walk with me, and tell me all about these funny old streets. I am sure they must be historical.'

They were at that moment walking along the

Boulevard St Germain, and Muriel replied naturally enough, 'Which old streets? You don't mean this one?'

'Well, there must be some interesting houses in this boulevard,' said Maud.

'I don't know any about here still existing. Alfred de Musset lived close by here, near the Musée Cluny; but that street has been destroyed, and this boulevard has been built on the site of very interesting streets of which you can see prints in the museum.'

'That church looks old,' objected Maud as they passed the Church of St Nicolas du Chardonnet.

'Oh, well, I do know something about that. There is a tomb to Madame Le Brun'——

Before Muriel had time to finish, Maud left her, and, going to the teacher in charge, begged to be allowed to go into the church to see a beautiful tomb.

'Aunt Lu did not care for it,' said Muriel when they were inside; 'but perhaps you will think it beautiful.'

'Oh,' cried Maud, 'why did you not say so before? You must not go leading us astray, you know.'

'Upon my word, Maud, you are laziness personified! Why, pray, is Muriel to think for you and tell you what is worth seeing in Paris and what is not? Surely you have eyes and brains of your own,' said another girl.

'That's just what I have not got. I have no idea whether a monument is beautiful or not unless I am told,' replied Maud.

'Then I don't see the use of going to look at them,' declared another girl.

'Don't you? Well, I do. Miss Taylor is training my eye.'

'Do you know Miss Taylor?' inquired Marthe, who thought she was the only one who knew Muriel's aunt, and was very proud of the fact, for her mother and the directrice of the school both considered that she was a very gifted artist, and the girls all held her in high esteem.

'No,' replied Maud. 'You were impolite enough to interrupt me in the middle of my speech, or you would have heard me say that Miss Taylor was educating my artistic eye through the means of her niece Muriel.'

By this time they were in front of the tomb of Madame Le Brun, where the artist is represented rising from the grave at the trump of the Archangel.

'H'm,' said Maud doubtfully, as she looked at the monument, 'it is rather—striking. I don't like it.'

'Of course not,' said another girl. 'As Miss Taylor does not, her pupil could not possibly approve. But it happens to be considered a very fine monument.'

'I wonder why all the English girls know Madame Le Brun, when they do not know some of our best painters,' inquired Aurore, a French girl.

'I can tell you that,' observed Maud. 'It is because most of us have a copy of a picture of her; it is a favourite in England.'

'Oh, well, this church was built by Monsieur

Le Brun. Perhaps that interests you,' observed Aurore.

'I am sorry to tear you away from what interests you; but we must go on or we shall have no walk at all,' said Madame Vincent.

'Oh Madame Vincent! can't we go along some other street, this boulevard is so uninteresting?' cried Maud. 'No one has lived here.'

'What a statement!' cried Madame Vincent. 'Oh yes, I know what you mean; but I think you might put it otherwise. Well, where do you want to go? I am afraid you want to explore ancient streets; but that I cannot do, for they are too narrow and you are out for your health, to get fresh air.'

'Mayn't we go to Notre Dame, madame?' suggested Muriel, whom the old building fascinated.

'Yes, yes; we shall have the fresh air blowing up the Seine, and walk along the quays. That will be lovely!' cried Maud.

So they turned down the Boulevard St Michel, past the Palais de Justice, where was the Conciergerie in which poor Marie Antoinette was imprisoned.

'No, girls, I cannot have you standing gazing through the gates,' expostulated Madame Vincent, as the girls—regardless of the crowd of lawyers' clerks and others less reputable, either idlers or engaged in some law business—stopped in front of the large gilded gates at the chief entrance in the Palais de Justice.

'We only want to see where Marie Antoinette's cell

is,' said Maud, as she lingered looking into the large courtyard.

'It has been done away with, and the place altered so that you cannot recognise it; but you may come into the Sainte Chapelle if you like; it is one of the most beautiful buildings in Paris,' said Madame Vincent.

'I have a lovely little sketch of it painted by Aunt Lu,' said Muriel.

'Oh, then, of course we will go,' said Maud; and off the party trooped up the stairs to the Sainte Chapelle.

'The king St Louis built it,' observed Madame Vincent, as she explained a little of the beauties of the architecture to the girls, the great height of the building, the buttresses, and the richly carved pinnacles; 'and here he used to rise three times in the night to pray. It was his private chapel.'

'He must have been dreadfully tired. I don't see how he could have attended to his kingdom,' observed a practical English girl.

'That was just what a poor woman who once came before him in his court of justice thought, and she cried out that he was only a king of priests, and that it was a great pity that he was king of France, and she wondered that he was not hounded out of the kingdom.'

'I rather agree with her,' said Maud. 'One has no right to be king if one does not attend to one's public duties.'

Madame Vincent smiled. 'You evidently have not studied that part of our history. St Louis IX. was one of the best kings France ever had, though he was a saint. Have you never heard of his oak at Vincennes, where he loved to dispense justice?'

'Dear, dear, that's another Louis that I must remember!' sighed Muriel.

'You must ask your aunt to take you to Vincennes to see the château of Vincennes and the beautiful Bois de Vincennes,' said Madame Vincent. 'The château has been the prison of an English king, so it will specially interest you.'

'We will not wait for your aunt, Muriel. We will go next week,' said Marthe.

'You see that wonderful clock built in the wall at the corner of the Quai de l'Horloge? Well, it was from the Tour de l'Horloge that the signal was given for the Massacre of St Bartholomew, and near there Charles IX. shot at the poor Huguenots as they fled,' said Marthe; 'but,' she added, 'you know, he was quite imbecile.'

'Muriel, will you do something to oblige me?' inquired Maud in an undertone.

'Yes,' replied Muriel readily, only too flattered to be asked a favour by an elder girl.

'Well, just walk slowly beside me, because I want to look at these old bookstalls,' said Maud, pointing to the row of trays like wooden desks on trestles ranged along the quays against the stone embankment of the river. 'I want to get a book.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Muriel, for the request was not what she expected, and she did not think Madame Vincent would like it.

'Oh, of course, if you would rather not'—— said Maud, half-offended.

'No, no; it is only—aren't they rather dirty? I mean, you don't know who has used them; you might catch something,' said the fastidious Muriel doubtfully.

'What about library books?' inquired Maud.

'My father used to say that one often did catch things from them,' replied Muriel.

'I wonder that you should be so fastidious. All the students of Paris buy books here. Your aunt'——

'My aunt does not buy books to become an artist,' expostulated Muriel.

'Never mind, I want a book about Old Paris, so don't take any notice if I stay behind. I shall ask this old woman;' and Maud went up to a stall-holder, a wizened old woman well known to the students of law and medicine in Paris, from whom it was said one never got a bargain, so that she was called the Harpy.

Muriel looked after her, and waited until the girls had passed, and still Maud did not come. Fortunately the others did not notice her, for she was bending over a tray of old books, and Muriel happened to be hidden from the other girls by some strangers who had come out of curiosity to look at one of the sights of Paris.

At last Maud, her face glowing with pleasure, came hurrying up to Muriel. 'Come along, Muriel; I have had such a find—Hare's *Walks in Paris*, the very book to read. I am so glad I happened to see it. Fancy its being there! It shows that I was right and you wrong. Look how clean it is!'

'Yes, it does look clean; but it is much thinner than father's was, and he had two volumes,' said Muriel. 'I wish I had brought it; but it got forgotten in all the hurry and worry. But I am glad you have got the book. I have read a little, and Aunt Lu says it first made her want to understand architecture and painting.'

'We will read it together,' said Maud generously, as she and Muriel hurried after the others.

By the time they caught up the rest the school was on the Pont Neuf, and they were all standing looking at Notre Dame. Just as they came up they heard Madame Vincent saying, 'Did you ever hear the old saying that one could not pass the twelve arches of the Pont Neuf without meeting a monk, a white horse, and two amiable women?'

'Oh, let's watch and see!' cried one of the younger girls.

Madame Vincent laughed. 'That was in the old times, when this was the centre of Paris.'

'And how is one to know if the women are amiable?' inquired another.

'That is the polite Parisian way of talking; but we have a saying about a white horse always passing

over London Bridge,' said Maud, joining in the conversation, and glad to find that she had not been missed.

'Madame, may we go and see Voltaire's house?' inquired a girl.

'Not with me. He was no favourite of mine, though I acknowledge his talents,' said Madame Vincent decidedly. 'Besides, I do not know where he lived.'

'Why, on Quai Voltaire, in Hôtel de Villette. The room is kept just the same as he left it.'

'It would not interest me at all,' replied Madame Vincent. 'I would rather go into that little Rue des Ursins, to see the tiny chapel where St Bernard preached, who was so humble that he thought he was a failure as a preacher, only it is a slum; or to see the house of Alfred de Musset, the poet, whom I heard one of you girls quoting this morning.'

'What was it, madame?' they cried. 'We only know that he wrote the *Nuits de Mai*.'

'It was just out of that that I was reciting,' said a girl, laughing; 'but I did not know any one could hear me.'

'Oh, was it you, Hortense? You seemed to be very sad; what was the great sorrow?' inquired Madame Vincent.

'Why, nothing, except that I am not to go out next Thursday,' laughed Hortense; 'and I only said those verses of Alfred de Musset because I had seen them on his monument the other day.'

'Tell us what they were!—Madame, make her recite them!' cried the girls.

After a little teasing Hortense agreed, and began:

'Rien ne nous rends si grand qu'un grand douleur.
Les vers les plus désespérés sont les plus beaux,
Et j'en connais des immortales qui sont de vrais sanglots.'

Nothing ennobles us like a great grief. The most despairing poems are finest, and I know some immortal verses that are pure sobs.

'And all that because you cannot go out on Thursday!' cried a matter-of-fact companion. 'You must be going to be a poetess.'

By this time they had arrived at Notre Dame, and were gazing up at its grand façade, and at the girls' entreaties they all went up the tower, and amused themselves by looking at the marvellous gargoyles or chimeras.

'Where on earth did the artist get his ideas from to conceive such horrors?' said one of the girls.

'They are the beasts of the Apocalypse,' said Muriel.

'Well, they are awful!' said the others in chorus, and then they began likening them to each other, to the indignation of the victims.

Maud meantime had been very quiet, apparently reading her new book. Suddenly Muriel turned to her and said, 'What does Hare say about Notre Dame? He does not always like every building that people admire, but he must like this one.'

'It isn't in the book,' replied Maud, but without giving any explanation.

'Oh, but it must be!' said Muriel. 'Let me look, Maud.'

Thus pressed, Maud, with a half-cross, half-amused look, gave her the book.

Muriel took it, and found that it was indeed Hare's *Walks* outside, but inside it was a treatise upon theology.

'Didn't you look inside before you bought it?' cried Muriel in astonishment, as she turned the pages full of some abstruse question, and very old.

'No, of course not. How was I to imagine that any one would take the trouble to paste this old sermon, or whatever it is, inside the cover of one of Hare's books? He is not so very valuable.'

Muriel turned the book over and over, much puzzled to explain the cause of such a trick.

'Do you know, I ought to have guessed that there was something wrong, because it is in two volumes. And, yes, see here, it is "vol. i." How much did you pay for it?'

'Four francs,' said Maud; 'but I should not have minded if it had been Hare instead of this rubbish.'

'Perhaps this is very interesting,' suggested Muriel.

'Then you may have the book. I don't want to see the horrid thing again,' said Maud with disgust, handing the book back to Muriel.

Muriel took it meekly, and, happening to open it, saw some words written in English:

'I am sending you this treatise which may answer the question you asked me the other night. I hope the binding will not shock you. I happened to have it loose without its contents, and slipped my treatise into it.—Yours, THE AUTHOR.'

'Look, Maud, how funny!' she cried, showing what she had found.

'Who is the author?' said Maud in rather an aggrieved tone.

'Anon,' replied Muriel, laughing.

'Well, he ought to have known better than to have misled me,' said Maud, as she took the book and threw it into the Seine.

'Oh Maud,' cried Muriel, 'what a pity! Perhaps it was valuable.'

'I don't believe it, and I don't want to read a person who would do such a thing as bind his sermon in another person's book; it's cheatery,' she declared.

Muriel laughed at Maud's disgust, and wrote the story and sent it to her aunt, as she did everything that happened; and Miss Taylor and her friend—for the two were friends now—also laughed over it.

The two art-students away in Normandy sketched together and lived together, and it is doubtful which did the other most good. Monsieur Goupil, who, with his wife, superintended the studies from nature, told his wife that the friendship was the most fortunate thing that could have happened.

'Ah, yes, for that insupportable demoiselle whom

one would never think to be noble by her manners. I too am very glad, for this year we have no repetition of those wild doings of last year; that dreadful girl was a terror to me,' replied his wife with a shake of the head.

'Pshaw, that was nothing! A little too much energy, but it was nothing—nothing.'

'What! you defend such doings? At any rate, I am glad she has found such a good friend. I only hope Miss Taylor will not regret her amiability to Mademoiselle Angelique.'

'That she will not, if she has any sense, for it has done her more good than it has to our Ange. Yes, I mean it; it has taken some of the stiffness out of l'Anglaise, and some of the cramped attitude of mind and body which prevents any one from becoming a true artist. I can see the difference in her sketches, and if I had not known what influence was at work I should have guessed it,' said the *maître*.

His wife was silent. She did not understand such a view, and could not see how Angelique, the wild student of last year, could do good to that very superior English girl.

Angelique, meanwhile, was behaving excellently, and the painter began to wonder if it would last, she was so very quiet and serious.

Truly, he was a good reader of human nature, the great artist, as well as a kind-hearted man, for the very next day after he had made this remark to his

wife, mademoiselle broke out with one of her wild frolics.

It was a damp evening after a sultry day, and Miss Taylor had gone to bed, saying that she felt tired and had a headache, and had left Angelique to dine alone, a thing that the lively French girl did not care for at all.

Just at that moment, as ill-luck would have it, some of her fellow-students passed the little inn, and saw l'Ange de l'Atelier sitting alone in the garden waiting for her dinner.

'What! alone, Mademoiselle l'Ange?' they cried. 'This will never do. Come and dine with us. We are all going to a village a kilometre off, where there is excellent fresh fish to be had.'

Angelique did not want much pressing, and off they all went, laughing and chattering like a pack of children.

Two and a half hours passed, and the quiet little country town was aroused by a curious noise, not singing, and not talking, but a kind of sad moan.

It was not yet dark, and the inhabitants all came out to their doors to see the strangest procession that had ever passed down their street: a long file of people following each other one by one in an erratic course across the street and back again, sometimes winding round lamp-posts, sometimes entering open doors and coming out again, each following exactly in the other's steps, and all led by the

first of the file, a woman presumably; though, as all were masked and wore the long, voluminous peasant-cloaks worn by the women of that part, it was not easy in the half-light to say who or what they were. And all the time they made a sort of buzz or musical moan. Some of the more timid people shrank inside their doors and crossed themselves, while others laughed and said it was Carnival at the wrong time.

Louise Taylor, roused by the noise, threw on a thick dressing-gown and peeped through the window-blind to see what the excitement was. After a moment she withdrew with an exclamation of irritation. 'Angelique leading a *mome!* I think she might have left off such silly student tricks. They are bad enough in Paris, but quite out of place here,' she muttered.

But the artist was right. Angelique had taught Louise Taylor something. She was annoyed, but she was not shocked; and though she meant to tell Angelique how silly she thought it, she was not disgusted with her, as she would have been some months ago.

The procession having reached its destination, the party disrobed, and Angelique came in, greeting the indignant landlady gaily. 'A masked procession, you say? I wish I had seen it; it might have been a subject for a picture. Was it pretty?' she inquired innocently.

'No, not so pretty as you are without that cloak,

It was not easy in the half-light to say who or what they were.

M. PAGE 222.

mademoiselle. Ah, you think I did not see your yellow shoes! A nice way to spend the evening when your friend is ill! One sees what you would be without her to keep you in order,' cried the landlady indignantly, as she gave Angelique her candle.

Angelique only laughed as she ran upstairs and knocked at Louise Taylor's door. 'I've come to get it over—the scolding, I mean,' she said.

'There is nothing to get over. I think you looked very silly; but I suppose that is what you wanted to do, so I have nothing more to say. Was the fish good?' said Louise Taylor.

'No, not very; and it has been a stupid evening,' replied Angelique. Then she went to bed, feeling very flat, and that was her only escapade on the tour.

But the artist's wife was very indignant. Complaints had been made to her and her husband, as being responsible for these young people, who had frightened the children, so the peasants said.

'My dear, it was only a *mome*—a students' procession. They often have them in Paris, and no one says anything; and it was really very gracefully led.'

'What! you uphold such doings?' repeated Madame Goupil. 'And that hideous moaning—that's not part of a *mome*.'

A *mome*, it must be explained, is a procession in Indian file, a kind of follow-my-leader through the streets of Paris, which the students sometimes amuse themselves by having.

But the painter even defended the humming. 'It was not inharmonious,' he declared, 'and I do not believe the children were frightened.' However, he assured the townsfolk that they should be disturbed no more, and the party soon moved on to another village.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE QUARREL.

PERHAPS it was not very polite of Muriel, since she was Marthe's guest, to go off with Maud on the school walks; but it really was Marthe's fault to begin with, for she had caused the coldness by her dishonourable action in reading Muriel's letter, or at least two half-sentences in it, which was a meanness that Muriel could not get over. Moreover, every time Marthe seemed cold or unfriendly, or when Muriel imagined that the former was so, she at once jumped to the conclusion that Marthe was thinking of Muriel's bad behaviour in running away from school, which she knew was a heinous crime in the eyes of a French girl. And Marthe, who, as has been said, was under the impression that it was her change of friends that Muriel was telling her aunt about, imagined, every time that Muriel went off with Maud, that it was a new proof of Muriel's fickleness.

This made it sometimes a little uncomfortable for Muriel when at home with the Ballanfahs; at school she was perfectly happy, for she was looked up to as a great authority on art, which she was not, and as a very bright girl, which she was.

One evening, after the school had been out all day, Marthe, who was feeling very sore at the way in which

Muriel had deserted her, could restrain herself no longer. They had said good-bye to the girls at the end of the street in which the Ballanfahs lived, and Madame Vincent had allowed them to go the few yards alone. Marthe had not been near Muriel all day, and as she joined the latter to walk home Marthe burst out with, 'Yes, you come and walk with me now because you can't help it; but you have taken good care to keep away from me so long as you could. I wonder you condescend to stay with us, since you dislike me so much!'

Muriel was taken aback. She knew that she had not spent much time with Marthe, but she had really no idea that Marthe had wanted her.

'Well, I suppose you do not wish to talk to me,' said Marthe furiously, as Muriel did not at once answer. 'You need not, if you don't like. I will not force my disagreeable company upon you;' and, with a toss of her head, Marthe walked as far away from Muriel as the pavement, which happened to be very broad, would allow.

'I think you had better not talk to me if you don't know how to behave yourself better than that,' said Muriel angrily.

'I suppose you always behave yourself properly; and, pray, do you think you have always been so well-behaved that I am going to take lessons from you?' cried Marthe.

It was an unfortunate remark, though Marthe meant no more by it than that she did not consider

Muriel any better behaved than herself; and if Muriel had answered her quietly, or tried to conciliate her at all, Marthe would gladly have made friends. As it was, she felt very uncomfortable at being so far from Muriel, for it must be remembered that she never went out alone, and she imagined that people looked surprised at seeing her apparently walking alone.

But Muriel made no sign; and Marthe, angrier than ever, walked quickly on to her house, longing for the distance to be over. Muriel, on the contrary, indignant at this allusion to what she imagined Marthe had read in her letter, walked on slowly in cold silence.

When Marthe arrived at the large door of the house in which the Ballanfahs had a flat, she was crying, and as she did not want the *concierge* to see it, she rang the bell and dashed in without noticing if Muriel was following, and did not tell the *concierge* that her friend was with her.

The result was that the man, having opened the door with a cord, did not know that Marthe was not alone, and shut the large door to with a bang.

Muriel stopped short in surprise; then, thinking it was a mistake, rang again, but very softly, for she had never rung the bell before, and did not know that it needed much pulling.

'*Allez-vous-en*,' cried the man from within, not even troubling to look through the spy-hole with which all *concierges* are provided, so sure was he that it was a beggar.

Muriel needed no second bidding. Furious at the insult—for such she supposed it to be—she turned on her heel and walked away. Instinctively she directed her steps towards the Rue de la Montagne de St Geneviève, and then she remembered that her aunt was not there, and stood still for a moment in dismay. However, she made up her mind to go there just the same. Madame Laval was her staunch admirer, and she would take care of her, thought poor Muriel, her eyes smarting with unshed tears, and her heart sore at this disgraceful behaviour on the part of Marthe in giving orders that she should not be let in.

When she got to the Rue de la Montagne de St Geneviève, Madame Laval greeted her with loud exclamations of delight. 'Ah, the dear *petite*, how glad I am to see you! Come in; come in. But how is it that you are out so late alone?' she suddenly added, for it struck her that Madame Ballanfah would not let her own daughter go out at that hour without any one.

'I want to go into the flat, please, madame,' said Muriel.

'Very well, mademoiselle; here is the key. You know your way. I have kept it dusted and aired, and when you have got what you want you can leave the key here for me, for I have unfortunately to go now for an hour or two.'

So saying, madame handed the key to Muriel, and the girl went slowly up the seven flights of stairs to the little flat which had seemed so homelike when

her aunt had been there, but which seemed so empty and lonely without her.

No doubt it was the contrast to the handsomely furnished and well-appointed flat of the Ballanfahs that made the little flat look so tiny and shabby; though, to do her justice, Muriel would never have noticed that if her aunt had been there; but, as it was, a great sense of loneliness and misery came over her, and she laid down her head on the table and cried bitterly.

Of course she could not go back to the Ballanfahs, even if Madame Ballanfah said she might. At first she thought of telegraphing for her aunt, and then she remembered that it would make her come back in the middle of her sketching-tour, and Muriel had learnt a little self-restraint.

'No,' she said to herself as she raised her head and looked out upon the sunset which was illuminating the sky; 'I must just stay here till she comes back. I shall not tell her anything about my being here at all, so that she won't worry.'

Then, as it was getting dusk, Muriel lighted a lamp, and decided to make the best of things; so, taking a sheet of paper, she sat down to write to her aunt, giving her a long description of the day and the fun they had had, and the interesting things they had seen, as follows:

'To-day Madame Vincent took us all up the Seine or down it, I don't know which, in a steamboat to a

lovely wood called the Forest of Meudon. What a lot of forests there are round Paris! Madame says this was part of an immense forest that stretched to Versailles formerly. We had settled to have lunch at a place in the forest called the Fontaine de Ste Marie, where Madame Vincent was told there was a restaurant; but when we got there we found that it was a funny little booth with only wine or beer and some cold sausage to be had, so we had to walk back to Meudon up on the top of a hill; still, as it was through a shady wood we did not much mind. The French girls were specially delighted, because we passed the place where they make the French air-ships, and there, just as we were passing, the airship called *La Patrie* went up. You should have heard the French girls, how they screamed and cried "*Bravo!*" till the gatekeeper came out and said we were not to stand there—I don't know why; and then they began quarrelling with the German girls as to which was the better, their ship or the *Zeppelin*, till madame stopped them. Anyway, it is a very ugly thing like a cigar, and yellow, and makes a great noise; in war one would know it was coming long before one saw it, and so Maud told them, and that it was not *pratique*, which annoyed them very much.

'At Meudon we passed the statue of Rabelais, who was the *curé* here; and then we had lunch in a very pretty garden all decorated with flags, and sat on the *terrasse* in front of where the château used be. Poor little Louis XVII. was brought here when he was

dying, to have fresh air, and died here; but the Germans burnt the château in 1870. That is the worst of Paris; nearly all the châteaux and places of interest have been destroyed either by themselves in their revolutions or by their enemies. I am glad we live in an island where our enemies cannot well come, and I hope they will never make a tunnel. Don't you?'

Such was Muriel's letter, which shows that she could interest herself in outside things in spite of her own troubles; though it will be observed that she never mentioned Marthe. After asking some questions as to her aunt's paintings, she wound up as she always did: 'Good-bye. I do wish you had been there; it was so picturesque that I am sure you would have found some lovely bits to paint.' But not a word did she say about her quarrel with Marthe; and as she only put the date, as she often did, she was not obliged to say where she wrote from, so Louise Taylor little knew that her niece was alone in her Paris flat.

By this time it was getting late; and Muriel, who had only had a light lunch in the middle of the day, began to feel hungry. She looked round and searched in the store-cupboard, but there was nothing to eat except some rice or some macaroni, which she could have cooked if she had liked; but Muriel had no appetite and no inclination to cook for herself, so she just went supperless to bed. She was not exactly afraid; but she felt very lonely, and in her

heart rather disappointed that no one came to fetch her back.

'I suppose Marthe has told her own tale, and Madame Ballanfah has taken her part, and perhaps she does not like me or think me a nice companion for Marthe,' said Muriel.

Then, leaving the lamp alight to keep her company, she went to sleep as soon as her hunger would let her.

And what of the Ballanfahs? In her secret heart, Muriel knew that she would have gone back with Madame Ballanfah, and for the first hour or two she had fully expected to hear her knock at the door; but as time went on and no one came, she had decided that there was nothing to be done but to stay where she was.

The fact that she had no money worried her a little; but she determined to tell Madame Laval all about it to-morrow, and she was sure that the good woman would lend her some till her aunt came home.

Madame Laval went out as soon as Muriel had gone upstairs, and did not think of telling her husband that the little English girl was in her flat; and he, who had been in the back courtyard, of course did not know.

Meanwhile Marthe had run upstairs and gone into her bedroom without passing through the dining-room, where her mother was sitting expecting her, and it was not for more than an hour that she knew anything about the quarrel; when, wondering what had

become of the two girls, she got up and went to look for them.

'Why, Marthe, how long have you both been in?' her mother inquired. 'Are you not hungry?'

'Yes, mamma,' said Marthe in a subdued voice.

'Where is Muriel?' continued Madame Ballanfah, suspecting something from Marthe's manner.

'I don't know. In the dining-room I suppose,' replied Marthe. 'She won't come near me if she can help it.'

'Why not? What nonsense is this again?' cried Madame Ballanfah, annoyed.

'It is not nonsense, mamma. She can't help not caring for me; but I think she might sometimes talk to me when we are out for the day, but she does not.'

'Well, well, never mind; go and look for her now. She has not been in the dining-room at all, so she must be in the drawing-room.'

But Muriel, as may be imagined, was not to be found, and Madame Ballanfah became alarmed.

'Did you see Miss Muriel go out?' she inquired of the maid.

'Miss Muriel has never been in. Mademoiselle Marthe came in alone, crying, and no one has been in since,' replied the servant.

'Marthe, what does this mean? Where did you part from Muriel?' inquired her mother.

Marthe was startled, and could not for the moment think where she had left Muriel, so confident had

she been that her friend had followed her into the house. 'I—I—thought she came in with me, mamma. She came to the door,' the girl stammered.

'Go and ask the *concierge*. No, I will go myself; and you must put on your hat and come too. I am afraid you have said something to hurt Muriel, and made her go away,' said Madame Ballanfah anxiously.

'I 'm afraid I have, mamma,' acknowledged Marthe, and she related the conversation.

'Dear, dear, I would not have had this happen for the world! I suppose she has gone to the school,' said her mother.

'*Non*, madame. Mademoiselle came in alone. No one followed her except a beggar. I remember now,' said the *concierge*.

'How do you know it was a beggar? Did you answer the ring?' inquired madame, who knew the *concierge* and his ways.

'No, indeed—I have something else to do; but I know their ring, so very humble, hardly daring to touch the bell.'

'Then you did not see who it was that was ringing? What did you say? Please tell me, Gustave,' she entreated.

As it happened, she was one of the oldest tenants, and a favourite with the surly old man, and he replied, 'I told him to go away, naturally. What would you have me say—"Enter, I pray you"?'

Madame Ballanfah gave vent to an exclamation;

she guessed what had happened at once, and was very angry with Marthe. 'You ought to have waited for your friend. I do not wonder at her not liking you. I am terribly sorry for it all!' she cried in great distress.

Then she set off for the school, where she hoped to find Muriel, accompanied by Marthe in a very penitent mood. But on their arrival the directrice was much alarmed on hearing their errand. 'No indeed, Muriel has not been here. Can she have gone to her aunt?' inquired Madame.

'I suppose that is what she has done,' said Madame Ballanfah. 'I am very sorry this should have happened, and all through foolish jealousy,' cried she in exasperation. 'However, I am sure that Marthe is sorry too. We must write to Muriel at her aunt's address in the country, and beg her to return. I think Marthe had better write — had she not, Madame?'

'I don't think Muriel can have gone out of Paris, mamma,' put in Marthe, 'because she has no money with her.'

'How do you know?' inquired Madame Ballanfah.

'Because she had only three francs with her to-day, and she spent them all,' said Marthe.

Madame Ballanfah looked blankly at the directrice, who observed, 'Perhaps she has gone to Madame Laval.'

Madame Ballanfah's face brightened. 'I never thought of that. Of course that is where she has

gone, and no doubt she has borrowed money from Madame Laval to go to her aunt. It is very unfortunate, and I hope it will be a lesson to you, Marthe.'

So off the two went to Rue de la Montagne de St Geneviève, where they found Monsieur Laval.

'Miss Taylor *la petite?* No, madame, she has not been here since my wife went out; and if she had come before I should have known, for I have been in the whole day. I am very sorry that you should be distressed about her, and I wish she had come here. No doubt she has gone to her aunt. It is not the first time, as you know.'

Madame Ballanfah looked at him warningly, for she did not wish Marthe to hear that tale; but Marthe was not listening—she was dreadfully frightened.

To think of Muriel lost and alone in Paris seemed terrible to the French girl, who had never been out alone, even to the post.

However, there was nothing to be done but to go home and consult Monsieur the Professor.

'The first thing to do is to have dinner. You are both famished, and we shall be able to think of something to do when you have eaten. The girl came to France alone, so she can find her way about Paris, I should hope.'

'It is not the same thing, and if she is not found to-night I shall not go to bed at all,' declared Madame Ballanfah, who could not eat anything.

About ten o'clock there came a knock at the door, and Madame Laval was announced.

'Where is she? Have you found her?' cried Madame Ballanfah eagerly.

'Yes indeed; she is fast asleep in her own little bed,' replied Madame Laval. 'Poor *petite*, she had been crying, and she has had no supper.'

'Oh, I must come and fetch her!' exclaimed Madame Ballanfah.

'If I may suggest, madame, I would do no such thing. We shall only frighten the little one. She is quite safe,' suggested the *concierge's* wife.

'But alone in a flat! It is impossible!'

'She will not be alone, madame. I am going to sleep in the next room,' said the good wife of the *concierge*, 'and to-morrow morning she will be rested and have had time to reflect, and I shall not give her the money to leave Paris till you have been to see her and reason with her.'

Being thus assured, Madame Ballanfah agreed to leave Muriel in the care of the good woman, and wait till the next day to go and see her runaway visitor.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE RECONCILIATION.

'WELL, you have been working as one inspired, *m'amie;* you should have some fine work to show this evening,' cried Angelique to Louise Taylor one day when the two, who had been sketching in different directions, met.

'How can you possibly know that?' demanded the other, smiling but surprised. 'I never saw you all day, nor you me.'

'Oh, but I did! No muse inspired me, so I strolled round to see how my *confrères* were getting on, and beheld you gazing with rapt eyes at some point on the horizon, and then painting with might and main,' replied Angelique.

'It was a group in the hay-field, not on the horizon, that I was sketching,' corrected Louise quietly; 'but I don't know where you could have been, nor why you did not come and speak to me.'

'Where is it?' inquired Mademoiselle de Ségur; and without waiting for an answer she took Louise Taylor's portfolio and drew from it the latter's sketching block. 'How strange!' was all her comment, as she looked long at the sketch.

'What is strange?' demanded her friend, rather disappointed, for Angelique generally had something

more interesting to say about her sketches than this bald remark; and to-day Louise—who had a high opinion of Angelique's talent when it was properly employed—had rather looked forward to some praise from the French girl. The little group that the English student had sketched was of an elder brother, aged about five, feeding a tiny baby with a spoon, while a rough sheep-dog sat up, tongue out, and watched the two. 'What is strange about it?' she repeated, coming up to Angelique.

For answer Angelique took out her own sketch.

'Why, you have done a group too, though we both started to do a landscape! How strange!' exclaimed Louise Taylor.

'That is precisely what I remarked; but that is not the only strange thing about it,' replied Angelique.

'That is the only resemblance I can see in them,' observed Miss Taylor; and she might well say so. Angelique had apparently seen a villainous-looking tramp on the roadside, and had sketched him in the act of lifting his arm and threatening his wife, whose hand was held out begging for something, probably some coppers to buy food for herself and her baby, both of whom looked wretched and ill-fed.

'It's the difference between us. You come out, and see a pretty pastoral scene, just the right thing for a summer day in the country; and I—don't.'

But there was another difference between them which Louise felt dimly, and felt with a pang, and

that was the force and power in Angelique's sketch compared with hers.

There was silence for a minute, and then Angelique remarked with a laugh, 'Well, yours is the selling kind.'

This was a most unwise remark to make to Louise Taylor, and the latter would have resented it if the postman had not arrived at the moment with a letter from Muriel, which put everything out of her head.

'There is nothing wrong, I hope?' inquired Angelique anxiously, for the young aunt's brow was puckered.

'No—at least Muriel does not say so; but I feel as if she were not quite happy.' She held out the letter to Angelique, who read it and returned it.

'I see what you mean. It is not spontaneous—isn't that the word? No doubt there is some slight squabble between her and Marthe. It is not easy for those of different countries to understand each other always, and it does them no harm to learn to do so. I should take no notice if I were you.'

Without knowing it, Miss Taylor, influenced by her friend, did not act upon impulse and write to ask if there was anything the matter, but simply replied by one of her 'artistic' letters, of which Muriel was so proud, and which she showed to her schoolfellows.

But to return to poor Muriel. Probably because she was very tired, and the day in the open air had made her sleepy, and also because her fit of crying

had exhausted her, Muriel slept so soundly that she never heard Madame Laval come softly into the flat about half-past ten, make herself a bed in the next room, and get into it. And it was only the next morning when a delicious cup of *café au lait* and roll were brought to her bedside that she woke up.

'Oh Madame Laval, how did you come here? Have you another key to the flat?' cried Muriel as soon as she had grasped where she was.

'I should hope so indeed. Do you think I would be without the means of entering all the apartments in my house? And it is just as well for you that I have, or you might have starved here, foolish little one! Now, drink this coffee, for you must be very hungry.'

Muriel sighed. 'You are very kind to me, madame. I am happier here with you. Will you let me stay here till my aunt comes back?'

'*Comment!* all alone! You, a young lady! But it is a shocking idea,' cried Madame Laval. 'No, mademoiselle; if you stop it must be with mademoiselle your aunt, whom we must recall from the country, which will be a pity; but it is absolutely necessary, as you evidently are not content with good Madame Ballanfah.' And here madame shook her head as if it were a bad business.

Muriel did not say anything. She was much disappointed. She had not expected Madame Laval to look at the matter in this light, and was surprised that she expressed disapproval at finding her there.

Poor Muriel felt very unhappy. She did not want to call her aunt home, and she could not go to Madame Ballanfah and ask to be taken back. At last she decided to go to school as usual, and ask the directrice what was to be done. Perhaps they would take her at the school. Anyway, she need not write to her aunt till five o'clock.

So Muriel put on her hat and was just going off when there came a knock at the door, and when she opened it Marthe rushed in, and, throwing her arms round Muriel to the latter's great embarrassment, cried, 'Oh Muriel, it was all a mistake! Come back! Please come back!'

'Yes indeed, Muriel, it has been a mistake. Marthe thought you were following her into the house; and though, of course, it was very rude of her not to let you come in first, I hope you will forgive her, because she was very unhappy. I have told her that she must try to get over her jealousy, and I hope you will try to like her again,' said Madame Ballanfah, who followed her daughter.

'I can't think why Marthe keeps saying I do not like her. I only don't like her when she is unkind,' said Muriel eagerly.

'But you said so in your letter'—— began Marthe, and then got very red and stopped short.

Muriel looked so surprised that her mother at once remarked, 'No doubt that is another foolish mistake you have made. When did Muriel write to you to tell you that?'

Marthe looked uncomfortable, but as her mother insisted upon an explanation, she gave it. But before Madame Ballanfah had time to scold her for such a dishonourable proceeding, Muriel exclaimed, 'But there was nothing of the sort in that letter. I thought'—— Here she stopped in her turn, and added in a different tone, 'What did you see, then, Marthe?'

Marthe repeated the words, which had remained in her memory.

'That was a private affair, and had to do with the way I came to stay with my aunt'—— Muriel was saying, when Madame Ballanfah interrupted her.

'And that is no business of Marthe's. I know all about it, and I quite agree with you that your private affairs are not to be talked of,' said madame.

'And it really did not mean that you liked some one else?' said Marthe.

'Now you see, Marthe, what trouble your curiosity and jealousy have caused!' cried Madame Ballanfah, as Muriel nodded. 'I hope it will be a lesson to you, and that in future you will leave other people's private correspondence alone.'

'*Mon dieu*, yes!' cried Marthe. 'Ah, what a dreadful evening we had! I, too, ate no dinner, and it was such a good dinner!' she said so regretfully that both Madame Ballanfah and Muriel laughed.

'And now we must go to school, or we shall be late,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'Oh dear, it is past nine! We shall have marks

for inexactitude,' said Marthe. 'I would rather not go at all.—Wouldn't you, Muriel?—And look how tired she looks! Could you not give us a half-holiday this morning, just to reward us?'

'Reward you! And for what, pray? You for having been so rude and unkind to your guest, and Muriel for being so foolish as to think you could have told the *concierge* to shut the door in her face?—No, indeed, Muriel, we are not so impolite in France,' said Madame Ballanfah, smiling.

But Marthe saw signs of yielding on her mother's part, and she begged harder.

'*Eh bien*, not to reward you for your past conduct, but to give you a morning to renew your friendship, I will take you with me to the Bon Marché, if you like; but perhaps you would rather go to school than come shopping?' she inquired.

However, the girls were unanimous in preferring the Bon Marché.

'We pass a lot of funny old streets, and not a bit dirty, so you will like them, Muriel,' said Marthe as the two went downstairs arm-in-arm, a most difficult proceeding owing to the staircase being narrow and winding.

'Ah, so you are going to forsake me after all,' said Madame Laval as the trio passed her. 'Well, it is best to wait till mademoiselle comes back, when I shall be very glad to have you both.'

'Since you have missed your lessons this morning I will give you a little lecture,' said Madame Ballanfah

as they passed down the Rue du Vieux Colombier. 'This is where Boileau lived, and where he used to have those literary reunions which La Fontaine has told us about. I have heard of an Englishman who used to stay here—Horace Walpole, whom you know more about than I do.'

'He was a politician; but please would you tell me who Boileau was? I am afraid I never heard of him,' said Muriel humbly.

'Boileau was a satirist. He and Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine all lived in the reign of our great king, Louis XIV., and were great friends. They used to meet in the Rue du Vieux Colombier with other literary friends. Boileau was a favourite at the Court, and used to speak very frankly to Louis XIV., and abuse his views and his verses (which were very bad), and quite embarrass Racine, who was with him, and who declared he would never go to Versailles with Boileau again; whereupon Boileau promised to be more polite next time, but was as bad as ever on his next visit.'

'I wonder the king liked him,' observed Marthe.

'He was a great king, and above minding truthful remarks; but every one did not take Boileau's satire so well. Once he wrote a satire called the *Mauvais Repas*, and called the confectioner who supplied it the poisoner, which made the man so angry that he had a satire against Boileau printed, and wrapped up his biscuits in it and sold them to his customers, and they sold well.'

'Oh, how unpleasant for Boileau! I should think it cured him of writing such things,' said Muriel.

'Not at all! He used to buy the biscuits. It only amused him. You see, Muriel, it does not do in this world to be so—how do you say—touchy?'

'Muriel knows about La Fontaine's fables, mamma, and Molière's plays,' put in Marthe hastily, for fear Muriel should take offence at this remark. 'Tell us something amusing about them.'

'La Fontaine was a grown-up child, whom every one spoilt; he was always called Le Bonhomme or Bon La Fontaine. He never had a penny, and would not have had a home if some kind benefactors had not always taken him into their house—which was very good of his friends, because he was not always an amusing guest. Sometimes he was invited to a dinner, and every one was looking forward to his brilliant talk; and he would come, eat *comme quatre*, as we say in France, not say a word, and then go to sleep.'

'Oh, how rude!' cried Marthe. 'I wonder they ever asked him.'

'He was a poet, remember, and these distractions meant that he happened to be composing something in his mind; or another time he never came at all—he was watching an ant for hours together.'

'Ordinary people are much more comfortable; don't you think so, mamma?' asked Marthe.

But Madame Ballanfah, who was married to a man who was not ordinary, would not allow this.

Monsieur was also absent-minded sometimes, and it was of this Marthe was thinking. 'They are not so interesting, and clever people are not always in the clouds. Racine used to play with his children as if he were a child himself; and what do you think was their favourite game?'

'Making plays, I suppose,' said Marthe.

'No; playing church. The little girls were the clergy, and their father walked before carrying the book or the Cross, and went through all the ceremonies quite gravely,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'I think that was silly for a great author; but never mind, tell us something about Molière, and then Muriel will remember all four,' said Marthe.

'Then she had better remember that his name was not Molière at all, but Poquelin,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'Oh, but she knows that!' protested Marthe.

'But indeed I did not,' replied Muriel. 'Why is he called Molière, then?'

'Because he acted under that name, and it was when acting in his comedy, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, that he was taken ill, and soon after died. He was really too ill to play, but he would not put out of employment so many poor actors and others connected with his theatre, he was so kind-hearted. You can see the fountain built opposite the house he died in, in Rue des Petit Champs.'

'And was buried first at Montmartre, and his widow lit a bonfire on his grave in winter,' said Muriel.

'Ah, you know that! Now I hope you are satisfied. If not you must ask papa; he can no doubt tell you every detail in their lives,' concluded Madame Ballanfah. 'I am not so well up in literature.'

'Oh, but we don't want to know so much.—Do we, Muriel?' said Marthe naïvely.—'That 's quite enough; but I am sure we have been quite as well employed as we should have been at school. I think it would be a good idea to take a morning's holiday like this sometimes, mamma.'

'Do you indeed? I am afraid I do not agree with you, and I am sure Madame would not,' replied her mother.

'All the same, one does not learn half as much at school as one does at home. The things that papa tells me I remember, and I shall never forget what you have told me; but what I learn at school is not so interesting.'

By this time they had arrived at the Bon Marché, and no more serious conversation was possible, for it was all Madame Ballanfah could do to force a way through the crowd which thronged the popular shop and keep the two girls close to her.

Marthe was soon busily employed helping her mother to choose stuffs, and thoroughly enjoying herself; while Muriel looked rather bored, if the truth be told, and wondered at the whole-hearted way in which Marthe entered into the advantage of one kind of tablecloth over another.

At last Marthe appealed to Muriel. 'Which do you

find the best—this damask with the sprigs, or this one with large flowers? It is true this is stronger, but it will be more difficult to darn, whereas the sprigs one could arrange quite invisibly, or perhaps stripes? They may have others.'

'I like the flowers best,' said Muriel, and evidently considered that she had done her part in giving this advice.

'Ah, perhaps a pattern well covering the cloth is best. Still, look, mamma, it is not so well woven.—Don't you think so, Muriel?'

'I shouldn't have it, then,' replied Muriel, as if this ended the matter.

Martha looked at her with disapproval. 'You will not make a good mistress of your house, and I thought English people knew all about good cloths. They always say the best comes from England,' she remarked reproachfully.

'I suppose I shall have to know all those things when I am grown-up; but it will not matter much; I shall just go to a good shop, and there they will know much better than I,' observed Muriel.

Marthe made gestures of despair, and left Muriel alone giving her own opinion till Madame Ballanfah said, 'Now, I think you two have had enough domestic economy for one morning. Come, I will take you into the reading-room, and leave you there for half-an-hour while I choose pots and pans.'

'Oh, come, Muriel; we shall find illustrated papers for children that will amuse you more,' cried Marthe,

who was in such high spirits now that all was right between her and Muriel that she was prepared to enjoy everything.

However, they were not the only young people who wanted to read amusing papers in the reading-room, for all the most interesting papers from their point of view were in use, and they had to content themselves with a very dull scientific review, which soon made Marthe yawn.

'I prefer literature to science—don't you, Muriel?' she inquired as she turned the pages of the magazine in the vain hope of finding something of interest.

'I think I prefer art,' said Muriel. 'I would rather paint a grand picture than write the greatest poem that has ever been written.'

'Oh, then, perhaps you did not care for the stories that mamma told us about Racine and Molière and Boileau and La Fontaine?' observed Marthe.

'Of course I did. That is education, and one wants education to be a great painter. How could one get subjects for one's pictures if one did not study?'

'You could do landscapes or portraits,' suggested Marthe. 'They pay best.'

Muriel could hardly find words to express her disgust. 'One does not paint for money. One paints for the sake of painting,' she cried.

'Oh, indeed? Then why do all painters sell their pictures?' inquired Marthe.

'They don't all do so. Turner, one of our greatest

painters, used to buy his back. He spent all his money in buying his pictures back when he was rich.'

'He must have been rather mad,' observed Marthe, without knowing that she was not so far from the truth.

Muriel did not choose to tell her that Turner was eccentric, but, turning the conversation, observed, 'Aunt Lu says that if you want to know whether persons are really well educated, go to a picture gallery with them, and you will soon see.'

'Why? Because they can't talk about art? My papa is very well educated, and he says he doesn't know anything about pictures,' objected Marthe.

'No, I did not mean that. Monsieur would know what the pictures were about—all the historical ones, and the battles—that is what I mean; and that shows that the artists have to know a lot to paint pictures.'

Marthe did not answer; like her father, she did not know much about pictures, nor did she care much. Presently she observed, 'I suppose Racine was a greater man than papa; but I should not think so much of my father if he were to play at church and walk about with a Cross and things; and he would never do it.'

## CHAPTER XX.

### MADEMOISELLE DE SÉGUR.

A FEW days after the incident of the two sketches which differed so much, and which had caused quite a sensation in the class, one of Angelique's fellow art-students inquired, '*Dites donc*, mademoiselle, do you not think that you are somewhat foolish?'

Angelique turned and surveyed the speaker with her quizzical look. The speaker was not a favourite of the merry French girl, who replied rather curtly, 'Isn't it a little late to ask me that? I thought it was settled that I was the most foolish member of our *cour* the first week I was among you.'

'But it was not settled then that you were the most gifted,' retorted the other significantly.

Angelique gave a slight shrug of her shoulders. 'Spare me! I am of age, I do assure you, and able to settle my own affairs.'

'You need not be so stiff. I suppose you have learnt that from your new friend l'Anglaise'—— the other began.

But Angelique stopped her. 'That also is my affair. If you have nothing else to say'——

'But I have, and you must listen, for we are all saying it, and it is for your good. We think you

were very silly to bring her here, because, except for you, she would not have come on this tour and shared with you the chance of winning the master's prize of a three years' scholarship. Now, not content with that, you are constantly with her, so that you give her all your original ideas and get nothing in return; for she is not original, that is certain, and not to be compared with you.'

'Indeed!' said Angelique. 'Pray, if that is true, why should I be afraid of her? Though it is not true. She is a better artist than I, and if she wins the prize it will be by her own merit, and she is welcome to it.'

'No, she is not welcome to it. We do not want her to be amongst us for three years more. There is no fun when she is here; even you have become quite good and proper, except for that *mome*, and I wonder she allowed that.'

But the girl got no further, for Angelique's patience was exhausted; and to disprove her companion's assertion that she was learning to be stiff like Miss Taylor, she made a dash at the other's canvas—which was on an easel in the same field as Angelique, where they were sketching a bit of the Seine—and flinging it as far as her arm could throw, she cried, 'Since you have nothing profitable to do this morning, go and fetch that—*voilà!*'

'But that is unpardonable, Mademoiselle Angelique, and I imagined that you were becoming more sensible under good influences,' exclaimed Monsieur Goupil,

who happened to come up behind the two at that moment.

'She wearied me, monsieur. It was unavoidable,' replied Angelique.

'But it must not be unavoidable if you are to remain with us. I cannot have the property of others destroyed like that,' protested the painter angrily.

'Reassure yourself, *mon maître;* it is not hurt at all; it has fallen the right side up,' remarked Angelique calmly.

'How do you know? And at all events,' he continued, finding this was true, as the artist brought it back and put it, in great displeasure, on its easel again, 'you did not know that it would so fall, and you might have done great damage.'

'*Pardon,* monsieur, but I *did* know that if you throw in a certain way it falls the same side up, and I have too much respect for art not to have taken care to throw it thus,' said Angelique.

The affronted owner of the ill-treated picture gave a muffled exclamation, but said nothing. There was nothing to be said; as it happened, no harm had been done, and it was a waste of time to remonstrate with Angelique.

But the master marked his displeasure by not examining Angelique's work at all, and expending double time on her indignant neighbour; seeing which, Mademoiselle de Ségur packed up her painting-gear and walked off home.

The master looked after her with a half-smile on his face, but said nothing to stop her.

'You finished early, then?' said Louise Taylor when she came in an hour afterwards and found Angelique lounging comfortably in an arm-chair. 'I have only just finished. Monsieur was very encouraging this morning. I almost wish he would not praise my work; it seems to annoy the others. I suppose it is a little jealousy of a foreigner, and I dare say it is natural. Besides, I think they find me unfriendly, and imagine that I do not like their jokes because I do not understand them.'

'Oh, don't worry about them or their jokes! They are not worth it, and it is a very good thing you do not understand them; you certainly would not like them if you did,' said Angelique.

'But you laugh at them,' replied Louise Taylor.

Angelique laughed. 'Because I laugh at everything—it is the easiest thing to do; but I do not always like them, and I like them less now than I used to do. At first the reaction from everlasting preaching amused and entertained me; but now'—— Here Angelique stopped, seeing Louise's face of inquiry.

'Everlasting preaching! What do you mean? Were you'—— and in her turn Louise Taylor checked herself, and added, 'I beg your pardon.'

'You needn't. I don't mind your asking me questions, because I know you do not ask from

curiosity but because you like me—at least I hope you do.'

'Yes, of course I do; but I don't want you to tell me anything about yourself unless you like,' replied Louise hastily.

'But I do like. I have often thought I would tell you how I came to be an artist, and about my home.' There was a pause, and then Angelique said with a laugh, 'You know I am noble—at least, that is how we say it in French. I mean that my family is noble, and I was born in a château. Oh *mon amie*, if you knew the dull life it is in an old château under the old régime! It stifled me. I lived with my grandmother, five aunts, and an uncle. My father and mother were dead. There were three families of us; one aunt was a widow, my uncle was married and had a son, and the other three aunts were unmarried; two of them were—impossible! And we all lived in the château.'

'I think that must have been trying, so many relations living at such close quarters,' said Louise sympathetically.

Angelique laughed again. 'Oh, it was not so close quarters as you think! The château was enormous, a great, old, rambling place, and each family had its own apartments, and never met except by appointment or to make state visits to each other. Sometimes we did not meet each other the whole week, and only saw each other at chapel on Sunday morning. Oh! it was wearisome, I can assure you.'

Louise Taylor smiled. 'I can't imagine your living such a life,' she said.

Angelique gave a little shiver. 'Well, I did for eighteen long years, and then they *fiancéed* me to my cousin, whom I detested, and that was the last straw.'

'You were engaged to your cousin! Why did you allow it if you disliked him?' inquired the English girl.

'I was not asked; they simply told me I was to marry him, and when I said I would not they shut me up in the *tour*—it was not a dungeon nor a prison, but I could not get out—and they came and preached to me—my aunts and even my grandmother, a stately old lady with white hair, in the brocades of a century ago, and a black stick which used to frighten me. They were always preaching to me about my unseemly spirits and my want of dignity, and now they preached to me about my poverty and my duty, which was to marry Victor; but I could not and I would not; and at last, when I had had enough of the *tour*, I—it's dreadful, and you will be shocked, even though you are an English girl—I ran away!'

'Poor Angelique!' was all that Louise said.

'I ran away to my old nurse, and she hid me for some time, and the aunts gave out that I had gone to stay with a cousin and make my home with her; and after a few weeks my *fiancé*, Victor, married, so I was not wanted back, if I had wanted to go; but I did not, and I just came up to Paris and began to be an art-student.'

'And have they forgiven you?' inquired Louise Taylor.

'I haven't asked them; but they would not if I asked them, which I have no intention of doing. To them I am dead, and it does not do to come alive again—it is too awkward; besides, I do not choose to.'

'I think you are wrong,' said Louise quietly. 'I am sure they often think of you. Didn't they care for you?'

Angelique got up and began moving restlessly about. 'My grandmother did, and one of my aunts was very fond of me.'

'Poor ladies!' said Louise softly.

'I have sometimes thought that I should like to see them again; but it is impossible, they would be so shocked. No young lady does what I have done, and they have never written to me,' she said.

'Do they know where you are?' inquired her friend.

'If they chose they might. Yes, I am sure they do. Old nurse came up to Paris with me, and brought me to her cousin, with whom I have stayed ever since.'

'Your nurse's cousin! You mean Madame Laval?' said Louise in surprise.

'Yes; but she disapproves of me too,' said Angelique with a laugh. 'It was a dreadful come-down for a De Ségur to become an art-student, and she has not forgiven me either.'

Louise Taylor was quite silent after this tale, and at last Angelique, who could never remain still for

long, asked impatiently, 'Well, what are you thinking about? You look very grave. Are you shocked?'

'No; I was only thinking of that white-haired old lady at your home, and the aunt who was fond of you, and what a sorrow it must be to them,' said the English girl quietly.

'She has never written to say so, or to ask me to go and see her,' said Angelique quickly, as if she did not like the idea.

'It was your place to write,' said Louise decidedly. 'Why don't you?'

'I! Never! It would be like asking to be forgiven,' said Angelique.

'Well, and don't you want that?' inquired Louise coolly.

The other looked at her in surprise. 'I don't want to go back. I hate the life. Besides, I said I would not write to them till they asked me, or till I had made a name for myself,' she declared.

'Perhaps your grandmother may not be alive then, and you would always regret not having seen her again,' Louise suggested.

'They would probably return my letter unread, and I couldn't stand that,' said Angelique.

And Louise thought she had never known the French girl until that day; she seemed to have changed, and become the proud daughter of an ancient house, a few of which still remain in France. She was no longer the student called ironically l'Ange of the studio.

Louise did not say any more, and Angelique suddenly turned and left the room. The English girl saw that she had tears in her eyes; but when she came back she spoke in an indifferent tone of other things, and the subject was not alluded to again between them.

Three days afterwards the landlady came in and said, as she handed a letter to Angelique, 'No, Mademoiselle Taylor, it is not for you this time. Mademoiselle has a letter, for a wonder—from her relatives doubtless, for it has the De Ségur crest. I did not grasp that you were from that noble house, mademoiselle. Ah me, how families go up and down! To think that a De Ségur should live under my humble roof and consort with art-students and such-like! Not but that Mademoiselle Taylor is a very good demoiselle.'

'That will do, madame,' said Angelique with some haughtiness; and Louise felt as if the tables were indeed turned, and did not know whether to be amused or annoyed at the landlady's remarks. Finally she smiled when she remembered how she had not thought Angelique good enough to know Muriel. 'One lives and learns,' she reflected.

Meanwhile Angelique, with a red spot on either cheek, was reading her letter.

'Well, *m'amie*, they want to see me. My aunt—the one I love—will come to Rouen and fetch me. I must not travel alone, of course,' she said with a half-laugh.

'I am very glad,' said Louise quietly.

'I am glad too, and thank you,' said Angelique; and then she began to sing a student-song, which she had not done for some time. 'I may as well let off the extra steam,' she remarked with a laugh.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE STUDENTS' TRICK.

'HERE we are, papa; and here is our young guest, whom we are all so glad to welcome back, are we not?' said Madame Ballanfah pleasantly, as they entered the flat just in time for twelve o'clock lunch, and found the Professor waiting for them and for his lunch.

Muriel had been made much of, and was prepared to be welcomed as heartily by Monsieur Ballanfah as by his wife and daughter; but what was her astonishment when he said very quietly, 'I am very glad to see you back; but I do not think you behaved very well in running away like that. You made madame very anxious. It does not do to run away from anything that is unpleasant.' And as Muriel did not reply, he continued, 'How do you think you are going to get through life if, the moment you imagine you have been insulted, you rush away goodness knows where?'

'I didn't run away. I only went away when the door was shut against me,' said Muriel, roused to defend herself at last.

'It was all a stupid mistake of the *concierge*, papa,' cried Marthe eagerly.

'I know that; but as it was not the *concierge* with

whom you were staying, but my wife, I think you might have come to tell her that you did not wish to stay with her.'

'Oh, but I did. I thought she did not want me,' said Muriel.

'I don't fancy you thought much, or you could not have thought that we did not want you. However,' he added kindly, as he saw that Muriel was very near tears, 'we will say no more about it; but remember, if anything goes wrong in future you must come to Madame Ballanfah, in whose charge you are, and tell her about it.'

'I think you were rather hard upon Muriel,' said madame to her husband when the two girls had left the room.

'She needed it. We can't have her running off like that when the fancy takes her, and staying all night in a flat alone,' said monsieur severely.

'She was not alone,' protested his wife.

'She meant to be. The fact is, that young lady wants her own way in everything, and she cannot have it; and it would have been better to have shown your disapproval of her behaviour, which is a very bad example for Marthe, than to have made such a heroine of her this morning. We shall have Marthe running off if she has this independent example before her.'

'There is no fear of Marthe's running a yard away from her mother,' said Madame Ballanfah, smiling and shaking her head. 'You must remember that this

poor child has no mother, and a father who goes off to the other end of the world and leaves his only child alone in England. I cannot help petting her a little.'

'I had forgotten that,' said Monsieur Ballanfah; and, repenting of his sternness, he was very kind to Muriel at lunch, and made friendly inquiries as to their morning walk.

'Mamma told us about all the celebrated people who lived in the streets we passed,' said Marthe with her usual exaggeration.

'She must have had her time well taken up. Whom did she tell you of? Chateaubriand and La Harpe, of course, and Madame Récamier, and Adrienne Lecouvreur; and did she show you the old *hôtel* of the Duchesse de Savoie in the Rue Garancière?'

The girls looked blank at this list of names which they had not been told of.

'Pray stop, René,' cried Madame Ballanfah, laughing. 'I was considered quite an authority on Old Paris and its celebrities this morning, and now you have spoilt it by displaying your superior knowledge.'

'I am very sorry,' said monsieur.

'Do not apologise, but tell me where that *hôtel* is. I do not know it.'

'In the Rue Garancière, near St Sulpice. You must have passed it, I think.'

'Not only this morning, but dozens of mornings; but I never thought of asking what house it was. To be sure, I might have told them of Chateaubriand and his faithful friend Madame Récamier, who, when

he was ill, used to come and see him every day, though she was almost blind—a dangerous matter, for coachmen would not drive through the streets owing to Paris being in revolution.'

'Not the great Revolution, but 1830,' put in her husband. 'Poor Paris, it has seen too many revolutions!'

'Papa,' suddenly observed Marthe, who, like a butterfly, flew from subject to subject, 'I wish the seats in the University were not so hard. I am sure one could attend to the lectures much better if one had nice, soft cushions.'

'You may be thankful that you have seats at all. The early students had none; they used to bring bundles of straw and sit upon them. They say Dante did so when he attended lectures here, if he did attend them.'

'I'd rather sit on a heap of straw; one could even go to sleep,' said Marthe. 'But, papa, Muriel wants to ask you something. Why is the University Quarter called the Latin Quarter? Is it because the students learn Latin?'

'Yes. Rabelais first called it so—Pays Latin; but in those days we had forty colleges, which have been demolished by one upheaval or another,' said the Professor.

'I'm glad they have. There are quite enough students to make a noise and behave badly as it is,' said Marthe. 'I can't imagine what it can have been like in those days.'

'Ah, they were real students then, men who came to Paris not to play but really to study,' said Monsieur Ballanfah.

'Oh, come now, René, they must have been pretty bad, for there used to be a street called Rue des Mauvais Garçons, because of the bad behaviour of the students. You told me that yourself.'

The Professor laughed. 'Well, I dare say they were lively—youth always is; but when a thing costs you much you value it more, and learning was more difficult to obtain then, and therefore more appreciated.' And, so saying, the Professor went off to give a lecture to his students, who were giving him some trouble at that moment, as it happened.

The house in which the Ballanfahs lived was at the corner of the street, and quite close to the wide street of the Rue de l'Université, and Marthe used sometimes to be wakened up at night by the noisy students going home from their clubs or other reunions.

This afternoon they were to have another proof of the students' mischievous love of fun.

It was getting dark, and a letter was brought in for Muriel.

'It is from Aunt Lu!' cried Muriel, taking it to the window to read it, and an exclamation from her caused Marthe to join her there. 'Fancy, Marthe, Aunt Lu is at Rouen! The party went on there quite unexpectedly. Oh, what a good thing that I did not write to her to come home!'

'Yes,' said Marthe, coming and taking Muriel's

arm; and then, so that she should not by chance see a word that was written in the letter, she turned her head away and looked out of the window, and presently it was Muriel whose attention was attracted by an exclamation from her.

'What is it, Marthe? What are you looking at so intently?' inquired Muriel.

'At that thing there in the gutter,' said Marthe; 'look, near the corner.'

Muriel peered out in the gathering gloom. 'I can't see anything. Is it an animal?' she inquired.

'No, something red; it looks like a spark of fire,' said Marthe.

Muriel gave vent to a prolonged 'O-h!' It must be explained that it was just after one of the constantly recurring scares about bombs. Two had been found in public places, and a house had been blown up just after the Minister to whom it belonged had gone out.

So when Marthe spoke of a spark of fire Muriel knew at once what she was afraid of.

'Look, there are two men looking at it too! And, see, they have started back, afraid! Yes, it is certain it is a bomb, and it will blow up this house!' exclaimed Marthe in excited accents.

'I don't believe it is a bomb. If it were, the police would see it,' declared Muriel; but as she said these words a gendarme, or agent, as they are called, came up and looked at the red spark too, and he also withdrew to a discreet distance.

'Let's go and tell papa,' cried Marthe, and away she rushed.

Muriel was inclined to think it all nonsense, and so was the Professor when he first came, till he saw two more agents arrive, and then a huge crowd assemble, which was kept back by the three agents.

'Look, papa, there is another agent arriving. It is indeed serious,' cried Marthe. 'Oh, let us go away before they blow us up!'

Monsieur Ballanfah did not reply; he was looking down to see what the police were doing.

'They are making a cordon, and will not allow the public to approach; and, see, this street is evidently considered dangerous, for no one is allowed to come down, and even carriages are turned back,' said Madame Ballanfah, who was now seriously alarmed.

'I will go down and see what the police think about it, and what they are going to do,' said Monsieur Ballanfah, taking his hat and going off.

'Do not go near it, René; promise me not to go near!' cried his wife.

'No, no, of course not; besides, the police will not allow any one to go near,' he replied. 'Do not be alarmed; but put on your hats; I may come and fetch you all. I do not like the look of things at all.'

'Why don't they take it up and see what it is?' said Muriel simply.

But the other two exclaimed at such an idea. 'Take up a bomb? Why, it might explode in your hand! It may explode any minute as it is,' said Marthe.

'Then it will kill a lot of people,' said Muriel calmly; at which the mother and daughter shuddered, and begged her not to say such dreadful things.

'Look, there are three more—five more—agents; that makes eight agents all at this corner! Oh, I wish they would do something; and I wish papa had not gone, or would come back,' said Marthe.

But Monsieur Ballanfah was conversing with the agents, who knew him well. He, like every one else, seemed fascinated by the red spark which was in the gutter, and it was some time before he came upstairs again.

'Well, what is it?' they cried as he appeared.

'The police think it is a bomb placed there by some Russian students,' said the Professor, who looked very pale. 'I think you had better come out to your sister's for the evening. No one dares to touch the infernal machine until the authorities from the Government works come; and in the meanwhile it may go off, though there is still a piece of wire to be burnt up.'

'Why don't they cut it off?' said Muriel from the background.

'Cut it off!' echoed the Professor. 'Cut what off?'

'Why, the red spark,' said Muriel. 'It could do no harm then.'

'They do not know how to cut the wire, and the movement might precipitate the disaster. At any rate, I would rather you were out of all this,' he declared, and he watched nervously till the three had put on their hats.

'If there is any danger of the house being blown up I should like to take one or two things with me,' said his wife.

'No, no,' objected her husband; 'the house will not be blown up; and if it were, there is not a moment to lose. A bit of bomb might fly no one knows where, and I would rather have you at a safe distance.'

At this moment a distant shout was heard, and then a loud hurrah, and the party ran to the windows. At first they all, including Muriel, thought it was a cry of horror, and meant that the explosion was coming; but they saw a motor drive up at a tremendous speed, and from it stepped a little, dapper gentleman, for whom the crowd and the gendarmes made place respectfully.

'It is the Government official from the chemical-works,' explained the Professor, peering down and seeing the face of the new-comer in the light of an electric lamp below.

The little man went up to the thing with a red spark, bent down amid the awed silence of the crowd, took the infernal machine in his hands, lifted it carefully into the back of the motor, which seemed to be a kind of cupboard, shut the door, stepped into his motor, and in half a minute from the time he had come was off again like an arrow.

The crowd gave vent to its pent-up feelings by a loud hurrah, and in two more minutes the crowd, which had been so serious, had dispersed, laughing and chattering about the occurrence, and disputing as to

whether it really had been a bomb or not, and demanding of the gendarmes why they had not taken it up since it seemed such a simple thing to do.

They would never have known the end of the affair if the Professor had not happened to meet the official who had picked up the machine, and asked him what it was.

'Oh, that sardine-tin! I expect your students had to do with that,' he said. 'I dare say it was for your benefit it was outside your house.'

'If it was a sardine-tin,' said the Professor rather testily, 'I should like to know why eight agents thought it necessary to come and surround it, and keep off the crowd?'

'They were quite right; it might have been dangerous. It would not have been the first sardine-tin to be used as an infernal machine; and you must know how to handle these things. It was very cleverly done. But it was quite harmless, as it happened.'

The Professor did not choose to tell his family that it was thought to be a hoax arranged for his benefit, in revenge for some unpopular act of his, nor did he say that it was a sardine-tin; but when they asked him about it he replied, 'The Professor of Chemistry says it was very cleverly done; but it was not dangerous, as it happened. It is not known who put it there.'

All of which was quite true, but not the whole truth.

'Well, I dare say it was those horrid students, and that they were watching all the time. In fact, I did see the two young men who first stood and looked at it, and attracted the attention of the first agent to it, look up at this window several times; and when it was all over they laughed louder than any one.'

'Pshaw, those empty-headed youths will laugh at anything and anybody!' said the Professor irritably. It was as well for those two young men that the Professor had not been able to recognise them in the dark, or it might have been unpleasant for them.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### LA MALMAISON.

'MADAME VINCENT, I have some good news for you,' said the teacher of mathematics to the teacher of history, while the two 'madames' were walking up and down the large, shady garden just off the Boulevard St Germain.

Madame Vincent, a tall and intelligent-looking woman, turned with a smile to her companion, and said, 'Yes; what is it?'

'La Comtesse de Ségur has written to us this morning,' replied the other.

'Is that such good news? Poor lady, if it had been *la petite* Angelique, now; but I fear she is too much set upon her independent and free life'——

'But that is just the good news. Angelique has written,' cried Madame Emilie joyfully.

'To us! Then she has forgiven us all our preaching? Perhaps it is the influence of l'Anglaise—Miss Taylor—for they are together a great deal, her niece tells me, though I should have thought Miss Taylor too reserved to attract our little Angelique,' observed Madame Vincent.

'You forget that our little Angelique is twenty now, and not little at all; moreover, it is not to us that she has written, but to her grandmother,

and the old Comtesse is so happy!' said Madame Emilie.

'The old Comtesse is a saint, then, to forgive such terrible conduct so quickly; but how glad I am! Perhaps now she will come and see us when she comes back to Paris, the dear child!' cried Madame Vincent, her severity all gone as she thought of the favourite pupil who had been so daring as to come to Paris to study art.

'I have no doubt she will. We must ask her to the distribution. She will like to hear Muriel recite; the child, it appears, made Angelique go to church, because Muriel took it for granted she did; and between them the two English girls have brought her round.'

'It is strange the influence that nation has! Here in the school it is they who are so keen about history. *Mon dieu!*' exclaimed Madame Vincent, 'I wonder how long this craze for history will last. We have never had anything like it before, and I am having almost too much of it; my knowledge is being taxed to the utmost to give all the information that the girls require. I fear every day to be asked some important question which I cannot answer.'

'There is no fear of that; what you do not know is not at all necessary for the girls to know,' replied the other.

'Ah, I am not so sure of that. I am called upon at all moments to settle knotty points, and give my

judgment upon events upon which it is really very difficult to decide; and, in fact, I am sometimes not in accordance with the views which some books teach.'

'Then I should say that there are different opinions upon the subject, and change it,' laughed her companion.

'Not so easy as you think; they want my opinion, and my reasons for thinking as I do, which are so difficult to give off-hand;' and Madame Vincent sighed. 'It's all the English girls; they started it, and the others have followed like a flock of sheep. That is the way with the English; if they want to do anything they do it, sooner or later, but they do it; and if they want to know anything it is the same.'

'It is a very good trait, and a very useful one,' said Madame Emilie.

'Yes, yes, no doubt; but they drive an idea to death. I never heard so much about the horrors of the Revolution as I have lately. And to tell you the truth, I don't quite like the tone they take, as if we were to blame for what happened; whereas it was the mob'——

'Still, the mob was French, and had been driven to madness by hard treatment and incited to rebellion by the writings of men like Rousseau and Voltaire,' asserted Madame Emilie.

'They were fighting for liberty,' protested the other.

Whereupon her companion, looking up quickly, said, 'Ah, I begin to understand why you and your pupils have discussions on the subject. No doubt the English are all for liberty.'

'Not at all. On the contrary, they are all against the people, and for Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette and the nobles.'

'Dear me, I should have thought it would have been the other way! You had better tell them that some of the first ideas of liberty came from England,' suggested Madame Emilie.

'Ah, I never thought of that,' said Madame Vincent. 'I will take the war into their country, and remind them that Voltaire, to whose works and imitators we owe the Revolution, in a measure learnt his views on liberty in England. Yes, that will be a good idea; but I must be careful not to set the two parties quarrelling. They were nearly doing so this morning over Napoleon.'

'Please, madame,' said a voice, 'we were just coming to speak to you about him.'

The two teachers, who had been pacing up and down the recreation-room during the interval, turned, to find Marthe standing beside them, her face full of eagerness. For the moment they forgot whom they had been talking about last, and said together, 'Him! Whom? Who wants to see me?'

'About Napoleon, please. We wish to go and see'—— began Marthe.

'Ah, Les Invalides! Of course I might have

thought of that. Yes, we will go to-morrow and see Napoleon's tomb,' said Madame Vincent, smiling and nodding. 'You see, I guess before you speak what you want.'

But Marthe's face did not show the pleasure that was expected. On the contrary, she looked disappointed, and said, 'Thank you, madame,' in such a dejected tone that Madame Emilie could not help laughing outright.

'What! you do not want to see the tomb that people come from all parts of the world to visit, and you such an admirer of the great little man?'

'I have seen the tomb, madame, more than once; but I dare say the English girls have not seen it, and will be glad to go,' said Marthe.

'Then where do you want to go?' inquired Madame Vincent kindly.

'To La Malmaison, please, madame,' cried Marthe eagerly.

'To La Malmaison—Josephine's château!' exclaimed Madame Vincent. 'What! you admire her too, do you? But that is far out of Paris; it means a whole afternoon. I do not know whether we can go. How many of you want to go? Perhaps the others would just as soon see the tomb, in which case I think we must go there; you see, we can walk there in half-an-hour.'

'I will ask them, if you wish, and tell you the numbers for each party,' suggested Marthe; and, on the teacher agreeing, off she ran.

'Maud, which would you rather go and see to-morrow—Napoleon's tomb at Les Invalides or La Malmaison?' she inquired eagerly.

'Oh, the tomb, of course! Who cares about flowers in comparison with such an interesting thing as Napoleon's tomb?' replied Maud. 'Which do you and Muriel like best—the tomb, of course?'

Marthe's face during this speech was a study. At the first words she looked very disappointed; but when Maud added her explanation for not wanting to go to La Malmaison she looked utterly bewildered, until Muriel laughed.

'What are you laughing at, Muriel? Do you want to go to a flower-show? Is it a very wonderful one?' inquired Maud.

Then Marthe began to understand, and gasped. 'It isn't a flower; it 's her château—palace—the palace of Josephine, Napoleon's first wife,' cried Marthe. 'Don't you remember my showing you a sprig from the cedar she planted?'

'Oh yes, of course I remember; but you did not say the name of the château, and how was I to know it was named after a carnation?' said Maud crossly, for she was not pleased at having shown her ignorance.

'The carnation was more likely named after it,' observed Muriel.

'Well, anyhow, that is the name of the château at which Josephine died, and it is full of memorials of Napoleon; and I thought you would like best to go

there, and Madame Vincent asked me to find out which you would like,' said Marthe.

'Why, Malmaison, to be sure,' replied Maud; 'it's outside Paris, isn't it? So that means a nice afternoon in the country, which will be lovely in this warm weather.'

To Marthe's great delight, it was decided that the elder girls were all to go to La Malmaison, and immediately after the noonday dinner they started.

'Now, *mes amies*, we are going to see the most wonderful flower in the world,' said Marthe, who was in a teasing mood.

'How?' 'What flower?' 'Does it grow in the park?' cried one after another of the girls.

'Yes, in the very middle of the park,' continued Marthe.

'How strange that I have never heard of it!' said one of the French girls. 'I have, of course, heard of and seen picture post-cards of the cedar which the Empress planted, but never a word about the plant. Is it very small, Marthe?' she inquired with interest.

'It is enormous—larger than this tram,' said Marthe, spreading out her arms to show its immense size.

Maud, very red in the face, sat listening to this joke. She knew very well what Marthe meant, and was not at all pleased.

'Ah, I knew it was nonsense! There is no such plant,' cried one of the girls.

'Indeed, it is true. Is it not, Muriel?' cried Marthe, turning to Muriel.

But Muriel would not answer; she knew that Marthe was doing this on purpose to annoy Maud, of whom she was jealous, and she leant forward very ostentatiously and began a conversation in a loud voice with the latter.

'Muriel, not so loud, please; we are not at home,' said the teacher; and then, being very quick-witted, she saw that something which annoyed the English girls was underneath this joke of Marthe's, and stopped it.

Fortunately for the enjoyment of the party, they were now at the point where the tram stopped for the château; and a few minutes' walk brought them to the entrance.

There, rather to the dismay of the teacher in charge, they found a large party of Americans waiting to be conducted over the château; and, instead of having the guide to themselves, they had to go in with the other party.

'Oh, isn't it exciting to think we are treading on the very steps that he trod?' said a French girl who was a great hero-worshipper, and she squeezed the arm of Marthe, from whom she knew she was sure to get sympathy.

One of the other party, an English boy, gave one glance at her and said in a tone of exaggerated awe, 'Oh, look, look, Mr Guide, you have forgotten to tell us about this!'

Every one, even those who had already passed out of the *salle à manger*, in which there were no personal relics, only handsome presents of gold plate

'Eh, monsieur, what have I not told you?' inquired the good-natured guide.

and so on given by great potentates to Napoleon, came back, anxious not to miss any object of interest, and followed the boy's gaze, which was apparently fixed on the ceiling, at which he was gazing with awe.

'Eh, monsieur, what have I not told you?' inquired the good-natured guide, who was too well used to worshippers of Napoleon to be surprised at anything.

'That web—spider's web—has it woven its threads over his head?'

The tone of ecstasy in which he said this was too much; the party roared with laughter, and the French girls mostly joined, for they understood very well what was said; but Marthe and her friend frowned and looked sulky.

Whereupon the naughty boy was incited to further nonsense, and turned the company of admiring pilgrims into a frivolous party of sightseers who made a joke of 'the most sacred things,' as Marthe said.

Only twice did the irreverent boy seem impressed. Once was when he entered the red-and-gilt room where Josephine died. 'Poor beggar!' he said with more feeling than the words which were used show; and another time when he was shown the travelling bureau, so compact and workman-like, that Napoleon used in his wars. 'Yes,' he said when he saw it, 'he was a real soldier. I will say that for him.'

Marthe, hoping to get some more sympathetic remarks out of him, for every one was listening to and laughing at him and his sallies of wit, observed to

her friend, so that he should hear, 'Look, that is the harp on which Josephine used to play such beautiful music in the evenings, like that one we saw in a tableau at the waxworks.'

The boy took no notice; but as they were leaving the room, some minutes afterwards, he said to the guide, 'I say, Mr Guide, do you know what? If I were you I should chuck out that old harp there. Mrs Josephine could only play two tunes, and one of them was the tune the old cow died of, and that's why old Nap divorced her.'

There was a great roar of laughter from the party, French and English; but Marthe murmured loudly, and said to the teacher, 'Oh Madame Vincent, can't we go through the park a different way? That horrid boy is spoiling all our pleasure.'

'Yes, I think we had better; but you should not be so silly as to mind; he is only in fun, and he would not have come to see the château if he did not admire Napoleon,' replied Madame Vincent.

'He called him old Nap!' cried the hero-worshipper indignantly.

'I believe "old" is a term of endearment in England, and they always shorten people's names, I am told, so that does not mean anything,' said the innocent teacher.

However, they did go a different way, and Marthe was able to sit under the cedar which Josephine had planted, and 'imagine' at her leisure.

'I wonder what Josephine thought about when she

sat under the shade of this tree,' said a thoughtless girl.

'How could she have sat under it when she only planted it a few years before she died? It was only a tiny tree!' exclaimed Marthe as she picked a twig; adding, 'I am going to plant this.'

'It won't grow,' declared the girls; but Marthe said she should try, and all the girls followed her example and picked twigs to keep as mementos.

Muriel and Maud felt themselves revenged for Marthe's teasing by their countryman's conduct, which had so annoyed Marthe, and to make up for it they were more friendly, so the party were quite happy until they heard a voice saying near them, 'I get rather sickened at all this talk about Napoleon. It's all very well for the French; but, hang it all! he hated us like poison, and kept trying to fight with us and conquer us, and a jolly time we should have had of it if he had succeeded. I wonder which of his beastly relations he'd have stuck upon the throne of England if he had invaded us.'

'Let us go and see the tent in which Napoleon used to work,' said the teacher, rising from the seat and hastening away from the cedar, which had lost its charm now that it was invaded by the enemy.

Muriel and Maud looked at each other and laughed. 'Do you know,' said the former in a confidential tone, 'that's just what I have often thought. I don't mean exactly what that boy said; but I mean that I don't see why we should go running after Napoleon,

and wanting to see his tomb, and all that, when he was our enemy.'

'But he is dead, and he did not do us the harm he wished, and we punished him quite enough in his lifetime. I like to feel that we are making up to him now for our harshness to him at St Helena, and no one can deny that he was a great man,' said Maud.

'Well, I suppose you are right; but I know one thing, and that is that if he were alive now, and I had to settle things, I should do just the same—just ship him off to a desert isle. The more I learn about him the more dangerous I think he was. And he *was* a selfish man,' Muriel wound up with emphasis. This time it was Maud who was silenced, for they were standing in the coach-house and viewing the state carriage in which Josephine came home for the last time after the divorce was signed.

'Yes, he was selfish; but it was for his country,' said Maud after a pause.

Muriel gave an unbelieving little shake of her head. 'It was only because he wanted to be emperor, and you see it was not any good, so he needn't have broken poor Josephine's heart.'

'I don't believe it did break, from all accounts; and if it did it was because she wanted to be empress. And look how extravagant and silly she was. I did not know till to-day that she painted her face, and was so vain and ignorant that she really was not fit to be the empress.'

'She was his wife,' cried Muriel, scandalised.

'Now, girls, we must go home. It has been most interesting, and it has shown me more than ever what a great man our Napoleon was,' said Madame Vincent as they all clambered into the tram.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### TURNING THE TABLES.

'WE can't stand any more of it, madame, and that is the fact,' said one of the French girls to Madame Vincent, who stood in the middle of the music-room, surrounded by a group of exclaiming, chattering girls.

'But I do not understand what is the matter,' she said in a bewildered way. 'What can you not stand? What has happened? If you all speak at once, of course, I cannot understand.—You, Emilie, explain matters to me.'

'Very well.—Be quiet, all of you; madame has asked me to speak.—We want to know all the bad things the English have done'—— began the girl named Emilie. But Madame Vincent's shocked face was too much for the French girls, who began to laugh so much that nothing could be heard.

'If that is all you have asked me to come here to talk about,' said Madame Vincent, preparing to leave the room, 'I shall go back to my occupation. I have too much that is important to do to stop and listen to such nonsense.'

'Oh, but it is not that at all, madame! Emilie has expressed herself badly,' cried another girl. 'This is

what is the matter: we want to know all the bad deeds recorded of the English in history.'

'That is not much better; and if that is to annoy your English schoolfellows, as I presume it is, then I certainly shall not gratify you. But while we are on the subject of English history, I should like to say that you would do well to learn their good deeds; your ignorance is appalling. Why, the other day I heard you say that if the English had had a revolution they would have behaved just as badly as our people did. I do not know which of you it was, but it was not a little girl.'

'How do you know they would not, madame?' inquired Emilie. 'They are worse-tempered than we are. Maud says that herself. Not that she is—in fact, she is very nice except when she begins to talk nastily about the way in which we treated our kings.'

'Oh, that's the trouble, is it? As for knowing the way the English would behave in a revolution, you have only to read their history, and you will be obliged to own that they at least did not behead their queen, though they liked her no more than we did Marie Antoinette,' replied madame.

'What! they did have a revolution? Oh yes, I remember all about it now; and, of course, they did behead their king, Charles I. I will say that to Maud and the others the very next time they say anything about our Louis XVI. But what did they do with his queen and his children? Didn't they

put them in the Tower? I thought I read about two little princes being murdered in the Tower,' cried Emilie, clapping her hands.

'You are a little mixed, my dear. The two little princes were not the children of Charles I.; they lived long before that. Charles I.'s wife and children fled to France and lived at the château of St Germain-en-Laye, and there too James II. found refuge and died; you can see his tomb in the church. Why, what is the matter, Emilie? Pray do not excite yourself so much for nothing,' expostulated Madame Vincent, for Emilie was jumping about the room, executing a kind of dance of joy.

'Madame, thank you so much! I have thought of a splendid vengeance,' cried Emilie, calming herself nevertheless. 'Will you take us to St Germain-en-Laye for our next holiday?'

Madame laughed. 'I suppose you wish to remind them of the fact that their queen fled to us for a home; that is a fact they know quite well, and I do not see what vengeance that will be. You must not be unamiable.'

'I shall not be unamiable; but I am going to read all about that part of their history, and talk about it all the time. I am tired of their knowing such a lot about our history, and telling us things that even we did not know.'

'If you will study any history, your own or that of other nations, I shall be glad, Emilie, for you are disgracefully ignorant. I cannot think how you

have been at school for so many years and have yet learnt so little.'

'*Mon dieu*, it is not my talent! But from to-day all that will be changed if you will only lend me an English history book.'

'That is a better resolution, and I think you will understand your English schoolfellows better if you read something about their history. And now I really must go, Emilie. You may come with me and I will give you the book.'

'Thank you for coming, madame, and thank you for what you have told us,' the girls cried after the teacher as she left the room, followed by Emilie.

Ten minutes after the French girls were chattering gaily about something else, and had forgotten all about the English girls and their criticism of the French and French history. But for a wonder Emilie did not throw down the history which Madame Vincent had lent her; either it interested her for its own sake, or else she was so determined to rival her foreign schoolfellows that she read on and on through the hour of recreation.

'Come, Emilie, put down that stupid book and dance with us,' cried one of her friends.

'It is not stupid, and it is time that you studied too,' said Emilie with dignity. Whereupon the others set upon her and tried to get the book away. 'Leave me alone, I tell you; and instead of being so frivolous, as Maud always calls us, just listen to this.'

'No, no, we don't want lessons out of school;

we are not like Maud, who is always wanting to acqui-are knowledge,"' said one of the girls, trying to imitate Maud's way of talking.

'No indeed; she makes me cross sometimes, she looks so superior when she sees us playing, and says "No, thanks" so disdainfully when we ask her to play too,' said another girl, walking across the room with her nose in the air to copy Maud.

'She does not walk a bit like that, and she does not mean to be superior; she is much too nice. It is only their way. I think they have an extra bone in their backs, the English; but I am going to make her bend down to-morrow, you will see,' said Emilie.

'Oh, how? Tell us the joke, Emilie!' they cried, crowding round Emilie and trying to read the page which seemed to amuse her so much. 'What do you find funny here? It is very sad: "Death of the king. Henriette receives the sad news at St-Germain-en-Laye." What can you be laughing at?'

'That! Can't you see the joke?' she replied, teasing them.

'No, we can't; and we think you and your history very *ennuyeux*,' they declared, trying again to take the book from the girl.

'No. Now, listen! To-morrow we are going to St-Germain-en-Laye, and I have found out a lot of things about the poor Stuarts, and how they came to us without a penny, and I am going to talk to you about it to-morrow—you know, just as those

English girls do about our kings and Marie Antoinette. I have heard enough about poor Marie Antoinette, and I am going to talk about poor Henriette Marie.'

'*Bon!* we will be much interested, and we will pity her very much,' they said in chorus.

'You must not exaggerate your pity. But, hush! Here come Maud and Muriel.—Well, Maud, are you glad to go and see another royal château?' inquired Emilie in a pleasant tone.

'Yes,' said Maud; 'and I have just read that Louis XIV. was born in a house close to the château. It is very old, and you are allowed to visit it, though it is a restaurant.'

'Yes, there is a good deal that is interesting at St-Germain-en-Laye,' replied Emilie, who did not choose to acknowledge that she had not known this fact. She said no more, not wishing Maud to tell her about Henriette Marie, and no more was said on the subject until they were in the steam tram, which Muriel always called the train-tram; and then, having filled one whole carriage by themselves, Emilie began, 'It must have been very inconvenient for Louis XIV. not to have the use of his château for so long.'

The only answer to this remark was a titter, whereupon Emilie frowned.

At last one of the French girls replied, 'Yes, very.'

Emilie frowned still more. This was not the reply she desired.

It was Maud who, turning her head away from the window out of which she had been looking, said,

'Why couldn't Louis use his château? What had happened to it?'

'He had lent it to the poor wife of Charles I., and she lived there after her husband was—dead,' said Emilie triumphantly. She had meant to say 'beheaded,' but the innate politeness of her nation came to the rescue and prevented her.

'Oh, was it here that the Stuart family came when they were obliged to fly.'

'Yes; at the English Revolution, you know,' said Emilie.

'Not at the Revolution,' said Maud quietly. 'You mean the great Rebellion; the Revolution was not till 1688. I am glad to come; I did not know it was at St-Germain that Charles II. lived in his exile; but, after all, it was not such a very wonderful thing for Louis XIV. to give a home to his own sister.'

There was silence among the French, for they had not thought of this.

'Well, it was a revolution, whatever you call it,' said Emilie obstinately.

'No, because it did not change anything. At any rate, we call it the Rebellion. The Revolution was in 1688, when James II. fled to France.'

'Yes, he came here too, and was supported by our king,' observed Emilie, who felt that somehow her vengeance, as she had termed it, was falling flat.

'I know. We were very grateful to him,' replied Maud.

'And that is more than James showed himself to

be, for although he was in France, and dependent upon the king of France for his daily bread, he obstinately kept the title of king of France, which neither he nor his predecessors had any right to take,' said one of the girls. 'I know that, for we used to live at St-Germain, and I can show you his tomb.'

'Oh, really! I should like to see that,' cried Maud. 'How little one knows! I have read so many tales of the Stuarts and their misfortunes, and yet I never knew that he was buried at St-Germain. Poor man, he was shamefully treated,' said Maud, who was a thorough-going Royalist.

'Ah, then, you own that you sometimes treat your kings badly?' cried Emilie.

'I had nothing to do with it,' said Maud.

'Of course, not you personally, but the English—your ancestors,' said Emilie.

'I am not English, but Scotch, and my ancestors fought to the last for the Stuarts,' observed Maud in her quiet, dignified way.

'Oh!' said Emilie, and said no more. It was evidently no use trying to overwhelm Maud with the misdeeds of the English if she was not English.

'But *I* am English, and I think it was quite right to send James II. away, because he did not govern according to the laws of the land,' said Muriel stoutly, 'and our next queen learnt by that that she must govern properly.'

Maud and Muriel had been walking together, for Marthe had been let into the plot, and had joined the

French party for the moment. Her jealousy of Maud was not conquered, though she did not show it, and tried to get over it; but when Muriel said this Maud raised her head in the way that the French girls called disdainful and walked away from her to look at the tomb of James II. in the Church of St-Germain, and leant over the rails reading the long Latin inscription till Madame Vincent called her away.

'Now, girls, let us go and see the forest. Do you not think it will be very pleasant to sit under the shade of the trees in this heat?' said Madame Vincent, who thought history had better be given a rest.

'Oh madame, do let us see the pavilion where Louis XIV. was born!' cried Emilie, who had taken to historical research for the moment.

'We can do both—it is on our way; and if you like we will drive through the forest. But it seems to me that you have not yet expressed a desire to see the most noted of the sights of St-Germain-en-Laye.'

'Why, the château? We have seen it, and it was not a bit pretty, and all those stupid antiquities are very dull.'

'I do not happen to mean the château. I am speaking of the wonderful terrace, two miles long, which looks out upon the valley of the Seine. The view is splendid, and they say there is not another terrace like it in the world. We can go and have coffee there before Henri IV.'s pavilion, and then drive

through the forest, and by that time I think it will be time to go home.'

Somehow, Madame Vincent always arranged things just right; she thought of every one's pleasure but her own, and after a day's outing with her the girls invariably came home in good temper, having learnt something, if not historical, at least useful.

Maud walked off beside Madame Vincent, whom she questioned about Henri IV., for Maud never let an opportunity pass of gaining information, and she was such an intelligent companion that Madame Vincent talked to her for the rest of the walk.

Muriel made one attempt to rejoin her, and said to Marthe, 'Wouldn't you like to hear what madame is saying?' which she thought would be a good way of putting it, so as not to arouse her jealousy.

But Marthe shrugged her shoulders. 'She is only talking about the chapel which St Louis had built. It does not interest me; but if you wish to go, do.'

Muriel hesitated; but, much as she would have liked to join Maud, she would not do so without Marthe, and it was just as well that she did exercise this piece of self-denial, for Maud had not forgiven her for her speech about King James.

So she walked beside Marthe, who began suddenly, 'Have you not a friend-artist living in your house who is named Mademoiselle de Ségur?'

Muriel looked up surprised, for her aunt had never spoken of Angelique to Marthe, she was sure, and she herself had not either, because of a remark Marthe

had once made that no French girl who was *bien élevée* would be an art-student, which offended Muriel greatly till she found that in France many people think that it is not *bien élevée* for a woman to do anything at all. But, as Marthe was beginning to be a little less narrow, Muriel determined to stand up for her friend, and said stoutly, 'Yes; and we like her very much indeed. She is with my aunt in the country.'

'How funny that you did not speak of her before! You are different from me. I could not keep anything from you as you do from me. I wonder what other secrets you have from me,' cried Marthe.

Muriel coloured furiously and said, 'It is no business of yours.'

It was Marthe's turn to be surprised, and she said hastily, 'I am sorry, Muriel; I did not mean to vex you or be curious; it is a fault of mine, but I was interested to know that Angelique lived in the same house as you.'

'Why should you be interested, and why do you call her Angelique? You do not know her, for you told me you knew no art-students,' said Muriel, who was a little jealous that Marthe should call Angelique by her name.

'But I know Angelique de Ségur, because she was at school with me at the Madames',' replied Marthe.

Muriel looked incredulous. 'Mademoiselle Angelique at this school with you! But she is quite grown-up; and, besides, she never told me.'

Marthe smiled a little maliciously. 'It was not your business, you know; and, besides, I have been at school for seven years, and Angelique used to play with me when I was a tiny child and she a big girl. I loved her very much, and I did not know till the other day that she had become an art-student.'

'Who told you that?' inquired Muriel.

'No one,' said Marthe, looking rather ashamed. 'I heard Madame the directrice telling one of the other Madames.'

'Oh!' said Muriel, and changed the conversation; and so vexed was she with Marthe that she made overtures to Maud when, as it happened, she found herself next her on the terrace where they had tea; but Maud still talked to Madame Vincent, and only answered Muriel when she spoke, for Maud was far too dignified to be rude; but as one of the English girls said, 'Maud was in one of her freezing moods,' and she effectually froze all Muriel's attempts at friendliness.

Marthe observed this, and in her heart she was not sorry, for she did not care for Maud, and wanted Muriel to herself. However, she had tact enough not to say anything about it, and only redoubled her attentions to Muriel, who fortunately quickly recovered her temper; and, after all, the walk ended quite happily.

'All the same, Emilie, we have not had our promised sport,' observed another French girl to Emilie, who was seated at the end of the tram farthest from Maud. 'Where is our revenge? Miss Maud has not shown herself to be at all overwhelmed with our knowledge,

nor was she ashamed of her treatment of her king. I did not understand what she said; but she seems not to be English at all, and yet to have fought for the poor king.'

'Oh, I do not know what she is. They are all English for me that come from across the Channel; and as for her, she is too well satisfied with herself ever to be humbled. I shall not bother about her any more.'

'But how are we to stop her talking French history? That is what *ennuies* me,' said the other naïvely.

'Never! If she wishes to do so, she will, and if she chooses to know such a lot it is her affair. I have no talent for such studies.'

And so ended Emilie's historical researches.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A FAMILY EXCURSION.

'OH mamma, I am so glad, so very glad, Maud does not speak to Muriel any more!' cried Marthe one day, as she flitted about her mother's room, waiting upon her and helping her to make *grande toilette*, as she explained to Muriel.

'Fie, fie, Marthe! are you not ashamed of being so jealous?' expostulated her mother.

'Is that being jealous?' inquired Marthe innocently.

'If it is not being jealous I should like to know what it is?' replied Madame Ballanfah, much amused.

'I thought it was only being fond of Muriel,' replied Marthe.

'If being fond of Muriel makes you sorry that other people are fond of her, then that is being jealous, and it is a very ugly fault,' said madame.

'Oh, but my fondness and Maud's are not a bit alike. Maud only liked Muriel for what she could tell her about art and antiquities,' exclaimed Marthe.

'And you—why do you like Muriel, pray?'

'Because I enjoy being with her for herself,' explained Marthe.

'In other words, for the pleasure her company gives you, which is much the same reason why

Maud likes Muriel, or why we all like our friends,' persisted Madame Ballanfah, as she put the finishing touches to her toilet.

'You will not understand, mamma! I don't write down all Muriel says, and then put it in a letter and send it to England, as Maud does; and, what do you think, I believe it is printed when it gets there,' she added with awe.

'Really! Do you mean that she writes letters to the papers? I did not know she was clever enough for that, nor old enough,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'But don't you think it mean?' cried Marthe, who had expected her mother to be shocked at her information.

'Certainly not. Why should she not write what she likes to the papers, if indeed she does do so, which I am inclined to doubt?' said her mother.

'Well, anyway, she is ashamed of it, and does not want any one to know it, for she always posts her letters herself.'

'Then how do you know it? I hope you have not been meddling again with other people's letters,' said Madame Ballanfah gravely.

'Oh no, mamma, I could not help it this time. She dropped the letter in the corridor, and I picked it up to see whose it was, and it had on it the name of an English paper for girls that Muriel talks about; and of course I did not know whom it belonged to till Maud came up, and, looking very red, said, "That is my property, please."'

'I hope you have not told any one of this, Marthe?' was Madame Ballanfah's reply.

'No, because it only happened this morning, so I have had no time. But why am I not to speak of it? I think Muriel ought to know.'

'Pray, why do you want Muriel to know? So that she may think less of Maud? Well, I do not think it would have the desired effect; but, at any rate, I forbid you to speak of it to any one. Do you understand?'

'Yes,' replied Marthe, and her mother knew that she would keep her word.

'That is right; and now I hope you will forget all about having seen that letter,' concluded her mother.

'I would like to know one thing, and that is why Maud got so red when she asked me to give her the letter. Why was she ashamed?'

'Because she is very proud, and the English are like that, very reserved about such things. I remember reading once of a famous Englishwoman who wrote, and her family did not know it for years, and when she became a well-known novelist she used to hear her books read and discussed by her family, and they used to wonder who the author was. I dare say Maud does not tell any one that she writes these letters to the paper.'

'I can't think what she writes about. They can't want to hear French history in the paper,' said Marthe.

'Never mind, it is no business of yours, and you have promised me to forget all about it.'

'Very well,' said Marthe; but after a few minutes she added, 'I should tell every single person I met if I wrote a letter that people thought good enough to put in a paper.'

'You are a Parisian, and Maud is a Londoner, whatever she may call herself—that is the difference between you; and I do not think you will ever understand,' observed Madame Ballanfah.

'No, I don't think I shall,' said Marthe, and she never did.

Meanwhile she had Muriel to herself, and to please the latter she tried to find pretty walks for their holidays; and as most of the pretty places round Paris have been chosen by the kings of France to build palaces upon, these walks had always some historical interest; and as monsieur the Professor was often of the party, he had always something interesting to tell them.

'Marthe, do French people always go out the whole family together?' inquired Muriel the next time they went out on Sunday for a walk.

'How do you mean? Of course the father and mother go out with their children. How else would they go out—one at a time?' inquired Marthe in a surprised tone.

Muriel found it a little difficult to explain. 'I mean, when there are grown-up brothers and sisters do they still go out as your cousins do?'

'How do my cousins go out? What is there funny about them? They just walk out with my

uncle and aunt. How else should they do? I do not understand. Tell me how they do in England.'

'Well, when the boys get to fourteen or fifteen they generally don't care to go out with their sisters; they like to go with other boys; and the elder sisters like to go out with their friends; and sometimes my aunt used to take the younger children without my uncle; but here the father always seems to come. Hasn't he other engagements?' demanded Muriel.

Marthe made energetic gestures of disapproval. 'He likes his family best; and my cousins Marie and Henriette would not be allowed to go out with their friends alone if they wished to do so, which they would not, I am sure. And as for my boy-cousins, as you call them, they would not be allowed to go with other boys either; it would not be at all *comme il faut.* Surely well-conducted families go out together as we do?'

'I don't know any that do in London, not every holiday, as you do here. It looks so funny to me to see all the family walking out like that; the boys seem quite happy, but our boys would be bored—*ennuied* you call it.'

'Then they are not well-conducted,' said Marthe with decision.

Muriel did not argue the point with her friend, but she smiled to herself as she tried to fancy her cousins Jack and Frank walking Sunday after Sunday for two or three hours along the streets or into the Bois de Boulogne beside their sisters, and spending their

whole holidays in much the same way, only that the promenade would be extended, and include a tram or train journey to some pretty suburb, where the family would take lunch or coffee.

However, she enjoyed these walks very much, and this holiday they were to go on the Seine.

'We are going to take a *Bateau Parisien*, and go to the park of St Cloud and see the cascade,' said Marthe. 'Oh, if you knew how beautiful it is, all the fountains playing, first a tiny trickle all among the statues and vases of pretty flowers, and down over the stone staircase, and then more and more little streams of water come from everywhere—water, water—down, down—into the basin and up again in high *jets d'eaux*. It is just like fairyland.—Isn't it, mamma?'

'It is very pretty, but I do not know that it is so grand as Versailles,' replied her mother.—'Papa, what do you think?'

'Eh, what were you saying?' inquired the Professor, who had been reading a paper. 'Were you comparing this to Versailles? There is no comparison. There is nothing here except the park, which is very fine, and contains many magnificent trees, and there is a fine view over Paris; but that is all there is—nothing left of the château.'

'But the cascade, papa? You have forgotten that!' cried Marthe.

'Oh, that! Well, you can have that at Versailles, if that is all you care about,' replied Monsieur Ballanfah rather indifferently.

Marthe nodded her head, not in the least abashed. 'It is true I prefer St Cloud to Versailles; it is more country, and the forest is beautiful, and—yes—I like the cascade best of all; and there is no guide. *Mon dieu*, how a guide wearies me! One cannot run fast enough to please him, and he knows so many figures which seem to be important to him, but which are quite indifferent to me; but'—with a beaming smile—'there is nothing here to give figures about, thank goodness! not even a guide to show the cascade and tell how much water it sends out.'

The Professor had again immersed himself in his paper, and had only heard a few words of this speech; and now, looking up, he said, 'Oh, if it is figures and facts that you want, I will tell you. St Cloud was originally the residence of the Bishops of Paris. François I. was the first king to live there occasionally, and after him the Princes of Orleans, and they had the park and gardens made so beautiful by the famous architect Mansart about 1760, and Napoleon I. had his Court here, and it was here that Napoleon III. was sitting at tea with the Empress Eugénie when war with Germany was announced. Eh, what?' he cried in astonishment, for Marthe's respect for her father and his learning was struggling with dismay at the historical lecture that she saw she had brought upon her, and Madame Ballanfah and Muriel, unable to resist Marthe's comical look of despair, were laughing heartily. 'What's the matter now? You asked for figures, did you not?'

'No, my dear, that is just the last thing Marthe wishes for,' said his wife, as she explained.

The Professor laughed as heartily as the others, and said good-humouredly, 'Well, perhaps you are right, Marthe; it will do you more good to amuse yourself to-day. After all, it is a holiday, and I too do not wish to give a lecture. Let us go to the Pavilion Bleu and have lunch. That will console Marthe for the facts and figures that she has been told.'

'Oh papa,' began Marthe apologetically, 'I like to hear about Napoleon I.! I shall like St Cloud more now that I know he lived here; and Muriel is so interested in the Empress Eugénie!'

'The lecture is finished, Marthe. Your face would discourage the most enthusiastic lecturer,' replied Monsieur Ballanfah, walking on with his wife, while Muriel and Marthe walked together. Suddenly the latter gave a cry of delight. 'My cousins!' she exclaimed, and Muriel saw advancing towards them the 'whole troop,' as she called them—Marthe's uncle and aunt and their six children, ranging from ten to twenty-two in age, all out for the day together.

'Fancy your coming here to-day too!' cried Marthe. 'What fun!'

'It was a happy chance. Now we can all lunch together,' cried Madame Ballanfah; 'that will make it more gay for our two girls, who cannot play games so well alone.'

'But it is not a chance that made us come; it was your husband who invited us. But it was indeed a

happy chance that led us to this spot at the very moment that you arrived here,' said Marthe's aunt somewhat reproachfully.

'What! you invited our relations, René,' cried his wife, 'and never told me? But how rude we must have seemed!—*Mon dieu!* he has so many *conférences* just now, and then his examinations for the year, which occupy him so much, you must forgive him; and all is well since we have met. Come, we will have lunch immediately,' said Madame Ballanfah genially.

'*Mon dieu*,' echoed the Professor, 'I commit faults at every turn! This morning I misunderstood Marthe, and gave her a lecture on St Cloud, which was the one thing she wished to avoid; and it appears that I have forgotten your promise to come with us.'

However, all being settled happily, the party went off and lunched, and then walked into the forest to amuse themselves till it was time for the cascade to begin to flow.

'Will you play with us, Muriel?' said the eldest girl-cousin. 'We are going to play a game called "catch the *courrier*."'

'Of course she will play; the English love games. —Don't they, Muriel?' inquired another daughter.

'Yes,' replied Muriel; 'but I don't know that game. Is it very difficult?'

But there was nothing to learn; it was a kind of 'drop the handkerchief,' and at this the boys of sixteen and fourteen played as gaily as the girls.

After about an hour the elder girls threw themselves down on the grass.

'We are too hot. You younger ones must play alone,' they cried.

'Muriel, you did not play half so energetically as Marthe. Do you not play such games in England?' inquired Marie, who was twenty-two.

'No—yes,' replied Muriel hesitatingly; 'at least I have played a game like that.' She did not wish to say that it was rather a baby's game in her opinion, nor that she had only played it at a school-children's treat.

'Do they not play it at your school?' inquired Marie, who was very fond of hearing about England and English schools.

'I do not know, but I should not think so. I never saw them. They played hockey and tennis; but I was not there long,' replied Muriel, who was always very truthful in her replies, and used to be the despair of Marthe because she was 'so particular about tiny facts,' as Marthe said.

But this remark naturally caused Marie to ask, 'How long have you been at school in England?'

Poor Muriel coloured, for this was a very sore subject. 'Not very long,' she said.

'I suppose you did not go till you were eight?' observed Marie. 'Here the children go still younger; but I have read in a book that it is not so in England.'

'Some children go at that age, but I had to stay

with my mother, so I did not go till much later,' said Muriel reluctantly.

Suddenly Marthe, who was idly listening, came to the rescue. 'Marie,' she said in an undertone, 'you forget that poor Muriel has lost her mother, and it was only because of that that she went to school, and it makes her sad to talk of it.'

'It is not only that,' began truthful Muriel.

But Marthe interrupted her. 'Never mind. Why should we speak of England? Marie is just like Maud, who will always be asking questions so as to "acquire knowledge," and there is nothing so wearisome;' and, so saying, she put her arm in Muriel's and led her away up one of the beautiful, shady avenues in the forest, and talked on in her rapid way about all sorts of things.

When they came back in half-an-hour they found their elders in a great state of mind at their absence.

'What could you have been thinking of, Marthe, to go away all alone like that? You should have taken Charles or René with you if you wished to take a walk. You know you are not allowed to do such things,' cried the Professor, who took Marthe by the hand and made her walk beside him as they went to see the cascade.

Muriel was so surprised that she could not help asking Marie why Monsieur Ballanfah was so angry with Marthe.

'Well, you see, it is not considered *comme il faut* for two young ladies to walk in the forest all alone

like that, and Marthe knew it. As for you, I know it is allowed in England, so do not think that he is vexed with you. For my part, I envy you very much for being allowed to go to school without a maid; it must be so convenient not to have to take one with you always; but here it is impossible; also, these woods are not the best of places to walk alone in,' explained Marie.

'But we were not alone; we were not a hundred yards off,' cried Muriel.

'Still, you were out of my aunt's and uncle's sight, and no one could tell that you were with your parents.' She meant, of course, relations.

Muriel said nothing, but she felt very glad that she was not a French girl; the idea of not being able to go out of sight of one's elders seemed too absurd, and Marthe looked like a naughty little girl holding her father's hand. However, Muriel heard her laughing merrily, so it was evident she did not feel in disgrace. It was just a case of *autre pays, autres mœurs.*

Marthe looked like a naughty little girl holding her father's hand.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### DUTY VERSUS PLEASURE.

MISS TAYLOR had been away five weeks. At first the trip was to have lasted three weeks or a month at most; but while they were away it was decided to extend it to Rouen, and stay there a fortnight; yet the fortnight was now over, and Miss Taylor had not spoken to Muriel about her return. Nor did Muriel know that her aunt had corresponded with Madame Ballanfah on the subject of her prolonged absence, and begged that Muriel might be sent to school as a boarder, and that madame had written entreating that Muriel might remain with them.

'It is our great regret that Marthe has no sister or brother, and we are, therefore, very glad to have a companion for her, and one whom she likes so much, and who is such a good example by her industry and ability,' wrote Marthe's mother; and Miss Taylor was only too glad and grateful to have such a nice family for Muriel to stay with.

'It is lovely that your aunt does not come back—I mean for me,' said Marthe very often; and though Muriel did not say so, she was enjoying herself so much that she did not regret her aunt's absence as much as she had expected to do, and after five weeks she

had become so accustomed to her present life that she did not think of Miss Taylor's return at all.

Nor did Louise Taylor think of her return, but for a very different reason.

Soon after their arrival at Rouen, Mademoiselle de Ségur the elder had come as arranged to fetch Angelique to pay a visit to the château. The English girl-artist thought she had never seen such a quaint and yet charming figure in her life as the old lady; she might have stepped out of a picture of an eighteenth-century lady.

'Yes,' said Angelique to her friend when the two were upstairs saying good-bye and finishing 'packing' (so they said), 'my aunt surprises you, I think. Our family have not changed their mode of dress or manners for the last hundred years, and the ladies have certainly not left the château for a night for that time.'

'I only wish other people had not changed their manners either,' was Louise Taylor's reply; and she did not mean to flatter, for she was charmed with the old-world courtesy of the old lady.

'Ah, you should see my grandmother; she really is a picture, and a beautiful one,' replied Angelique, who was evidently pleased with the compliment. 'And my aunt thinks you very *distinguée* too, and a very good companion for me,' she added, laughing.

'I am glad she is so kind,' said Louise Taylor; and again a remembrance of the time when she had snubbed Angelique so determinedly came to her mind,

and she smiled as she thought of the way the tables were turned, when she was pleased that Mademoiselle de Ségur the elder thought her a very good companion for Mademoiselle de Ségur the younger.

But now Angelique had to go, a little nervous at the thought of the ordeal she had to go through, as she imparted to Louise. 'For, you know, however much they may say they forgive me, they cannot forget, and I know *grand'mère* will preach—well, lecture me dreadfully.'

'Never mind. Think how happy she is to see you again!' said Louise as she said good-bye; and then Angelique and her aunt drove off to the station, and Louise Taylor was left alone.

She felt suddenly depressed. Her brother had written a sad letter, saying that he should be back in a couple of months, and meant to make arrangements for a long absence from England, where he felt he should never be able to settle down again; but that he should, of course, pay them a visit in Paris on his return, and talk the future of Muriel over with his sister.

Poor Louise felt that it was hard upon Muriel and her that their only near relative should go away goodness only knew where, and she feared that Muriel would be unhappy too.

The little inn appeared dull and dingy, and Louise decided to take a walk, though it was growing dark and chilly. Probably she caught a chill; at any rate, the next day she did not feel very well.

'If I were you, mademoiselle, I should stay at home and take a *tisane*. You seem to me to be feverish,' said the good landlady.

But Louise would not take her advice. 'It is nothing. I will sit in the sun and finish the sketch I began yesterday,' she replied. And so she did, but the next day she was obliged to stay in bed, and for many days after that.

The landlady was very good, and her fellow-students came to inquire for her; but Louise Taylor was very reserved, and none of them came farther than the door; and indeed she was too ill for visitors except the wife of the good painter, who was very kind. Still, the invalid had many long hours to pass alone and unattended.

One day she was in a half-sleep, having gone to sleep longing for some refreshing drink, when she felt a cool hand laid on her forehead, and opened languid eyes to see the bright, laughing face of Angelique de Ségur. 'The bad penny, as you say, come back again,' she remarked as she sat down by Louise's bedside and began feeding her with strawberries. 'They are from our gardens; my aunt gathered them herself on purpose for you when she heard that you were ill.'

'Who told her?' inquired Louise, who seemed to revive at sight of the bright face, and ate the strawberries with appetite.

'I told her, and Madame Goupil told me in a letter, and here I am.'

'Did you enjoy yourself?' asked Louise.

'Yes, especially coming away! Oh, I could never live there, and I think even *grand'mère* even sees that; and as for my cousin, how thankful I am that I am not his wife! Such a dull man I never met; but he would please you, no doubt, for his manners are excellent. I had to be dreadfully careful, and did not dare to sing.'

'I should think not, if you mean those student songs. I do so dislike them!'

Angelique laughed. 'I know it. Well, I won't tease you with them till you are well.'

Louise Taylor was well sooner than had been expected. Angelique always said that she had cured her with strawberries, and thought she should take out a patent; but the others said it was Angelique and her good spirits that did it. Still, it was nearly three weeks before Louise Taylor could go back to Paris, and unfortunately Angelique could not return with her, for she was summoned to her grandmother, who was suddenly taken very ill, and never spoke again. 'Oh, how glad, how very glad I am that I went that time! And it was your doing!' she cried to Louise as she said good-bye to her English friend and set off once more for the château.

One morning Marthe Ballanfah came dancing into the room, holding a letter high above her head, and saying, 'A letter from Rouen! What will you give me for it?' and she waved it in a tantalising way above Muriel's outstretched hand.

'Nothing, except a pinch if you do not give it to me at once,' cried Muriel, trying in vain to snatch it away from Marthe, who only gave it up when she saw that Muriel's quick temper was rising.

Muriel was always delighted to receive a letter from her aunt, and she opened this one with her usual alacrity.

'Well, what does she say? Aren't there any pretty descriptions?' inquired Marthe, who was accustomed to have Muriel read out bits to her, for Miss Taylor was a very good letter-writer, and gave such graphic descriptions of people and places that Muriel was very proud to show her letters to her friends, especially when they were illustrated with little sketches, as was generally the case, and to-day was no exception to the rule.

'"I think the Normandy peasants have almost the prettiest costumes of any peasants I know; but they seldom wear them now, except for the benefit of us artists. I am afraid in another twenty years they will be a thing of the past, so I am very glad I was not born twenty years later."'

'She does say such funny things, your aunt,' observed Marthe, as by Muriel's desire she came and read the letter along with her, for she knew her aunt had nothing private to tell her.

And then followed some little sketches of Norman peasants, fisherwives, and townsmen and townswomen. 'The children of Normandy must find history very easy, for the streets are named

after their dukes or other great men, with their dates and other information about them written underneath. The street I am staying in, which is called, as you see, William le Conquérant, has written underneath its name, "First Duke of Normandy," and the date, and it is the same with the other streets. The people all take an interest in their town and its fame. I never go out but some peasant asks me if I wish to visit the cathedral or one of the churches, or more often the statue of La Pucelle; and the other day I was looking at the tower she was confined in, wondering whether I could make a picture of it, when an old woman said politely, "Yes, that is the *tour* where La Pucelle was imprisoned, and she was burnt at the corner of the market-place, the Blessed Maid."'

'I suppose she means Joan of Arc,' said Muriel; 'but why does she call her the Pucelle? I have heard her called the Maid of Orleans, but I never heard that name before.'

'It means the young maid or virgin. The Rouen people always call Jeanne d'Arc La Pucelle. They are very proud of their town because so many travellers go to see it. For my part, when I travel I shall go to fashionable places. I do not like these ancient towns; they are never amusing,' observed Marthe.

She did not notice that Muriel was reading the next page of the letter, and did not pass on the next piece of information to her, but turned the page

quickly; and then, when she had finished the letter, folded it up and put it in her pocket, for Marthe was chattering about the kind of life she meant to lead when she was grown-up, and it was some time before she noticed that Muriel was very silent. But at last she did observe that her friend did not answer her, and cried, 'Do you not hear me, Muriel? I want to know where you would like best to travel.'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Muriel rather wearily. 'I think I would rather remain where I am.' And then she laughed at Marthe's face of surprise.

'What are you talking about, Muriel? I am not talking about now, of course. We can't travel yet, though we shall go somewhere for the summer holidays; but you seem to be vexed. Have I said anything?' and she came to Muriel.

'No, no. I vexed? No; I am only thinking. Let us talk about something else;' and she immediately began to ask about some lesson which she had to learn for the next day.

'You do study hard, Muriel; directly you come home you begin, and if mamma would let you you would go on till midnight, I really believe,' said Marthe.

'I want to be allowed to take part in the prize-giving,' said Muriel. To do this they had to have a certain number of marks, and Muriel had not yet enough.

'Oh, you will be sure to do that. You are making

up for coming late by getting full marks every day!' exclaimed Marthe.

'I don't know that I shall be able to go on doing that,' said Muriel; and then breaking off in what she was saying, she started talking of something else.

And then Madame Ballanfah came in holding an open letter in her hand. 'Well, Muriel, I suppose you have heard the news, good for you and bad for us? At least in one way, for I shall be very glad to see your aunt back, and of course you are very excited, though, to be sure, you will not be so wild as our Marthe would be,' she said, smiling at Muriel.

Marthe looked curiously at Muriel, and swiftly looked away; but Muriel had caught the look, and saw that Marthe knew now the cause of her downcast countenance, and Muriel felt ashamed.

'Yes, I am very glad to have Aunt Lu back again, madame,' she said; 'though I am sorry to leave you.'

'I wish she had given us a little longer notice; but still we can have one walk more, and perhaps she will be able to spare you on half-holidays even when she has returned,' said Madame Ballanfah; and then she went away, and Marthe followed her.

Muriel looked after Marthe, a little hurt at her desertion, and a little afraid that she despised her for not being pleased at the thought of her aunt's return; and then Muriel, as if to make amends for her disloyalty to Aunt Lu, to whom she really was devoted, sat down at once and wrote her a very affectionate

letter, saying that she should be very, very glad to see her again, and would have everything nice and comfortable at the flat in readiness for her.

After this she felt better and more satisfied with herself; and as Marthe did not come into the room, but, to her friend's surprise, passed the glass door with her hat on, Muriel took up her French literature and began to study it; and the thought came into her head that perhaps it would be nice to have her own aunt back, who loved her just as much when she was nasty as when she was nice.

But Muriel did her friend injustice. Marthe had not forsaken her. The fact was, Marthe—who had very quick eyes, as may have been remarked—had seen that Muriel was not altogether pleased at something, and she guessed that it was the thought of having less time for study, and having all the hard work to do that Muriel had in the student's little flat; so Marthe went to consult her mother. 'You see, mamma, Madame Laval told us that Muriel was so good that she did all the cooking, and of course that takes time; and fancy cooking in this weather—it will make her ill!' explained Marthe.

'But what are we to do? We cannot do it for her. And we cannot ask her aunt to stay here too. We have no room, even if she would do so,' observed Madame Ballanfah.

'No; but couldn't you write to Miss Taylor and ask her to allow Muriel to stay with us till the end of the

term? She lived without her all the years she has been here, and I am sure she would rather Muriel was with us and had time to study.'

'I don't know about that; and, besides, I do not think Muriel would stay. She has often said that her aunt never looked after herself properly when she lived alone. Still, I am sorry to lose her, and I should be sorry if she were not able to take part in the prize-giving because she had not time enough to prepare her lessons. However, we cannot do anything, so far as I can see, till Miss Taylor comes back.'

'Yes we can, mamma—at least, you can. You can write and ask her if Muriel may stay with us. Tell her about the prize-giving, and how hard Muriel is studying, and what a lot of time her lessons take; and then Miss Taylor will be sure to write back and tell us to keep her, and Muriel will be so pleased.'

'Very well, I will, if Muriel would like to stay. We will ask her,' said Madame Ballanfah doubtfully, for she was not sure that she was doing right in giving way to her daughter, who, however, generally got her way with her indulgent mother.

'No, no, do not ask Muriel; she will not like to say that she wants to stay. Let it be a surprise for her—do, mamma,' pleaded Marthe; and, against her better judgment, Madame Ballanfah sat down and wrote to Miss Taylor to beg that Muriel might stay with them till the end of the school-year. Then she and Marthe went out and posted the letter.

Madame Ballanfah had too much tact not to put

the invitation so that it should appear a favour to them, and she pointed out that the two girls were studying together for the prize-giving, which took up all their evenings, and she was afraid that if Muriel went away Marthe, who had never been so studious, would become idle again.

The two letters arrived by the same post, and puzzled Miss Taylor a good deal at first; and then she noticed that Muriel, whose letters hitherto had been full of this same prize-giving, did not mention it at all; and, putting two and two together, she guessed that if Muriel had dinners to cook and shopping to do the prize-giving would be impossible. So, without a moment's hesitation, she sat down and wrote by return to say that she accepted with many thanks Madame Ballanfah's kind invitation for Muriel, and would leave her there, provided Muriel herself wished it.

Then she wrote to Muriel, and said that she was very glad to find that the Ballanfahs were so fond of her, and that she would be pleased to leave her there, and would come and see her every day either there or at school, so that 'we shall see almost as much of each other as if you were at the flat with me. But remember that if you wish, for any reason, to come to me you have only to say so,' she wound up.

These two letters also arrived together, and Marthe, who remained with her mother to hear Miss Taylor's reply, came rushing in to Muriel to know what she had to say.

'Was that why you went away yesterday?' inquired Muriel, as she took the letter Marthe brought to her to read.

'Yes, do you mind? Aren't you pleased to stay with me?' said Marthe wistfully. 'I do want you so much!'

'So do I want to stay with you; but I would rather go to my aunt, please,' replied Muriel, to her friend's surprise.

'But why, Muriel? You won't be able to get the number of marks!' cried Marthe, who was much disappointed at this decision of Muriel's.

'I can't help that, Marthe. I could not let Aunt Lu come back to her flat to be alone. Yes, I know she used to live there alone before I came; but I know she never liked it, and I do not like it either. You see, she is very busy, and she said herself that she worked better when I was there to take care of her; and she is my aunt, you know; and I really want to go to her, though it will not be half so comfortable as it is here,' replied Muriel in the candid way she had which made people like her.

Somehow, Marthe did not feel that she could say a word to dissuade Muriel, and went back slowly to her parents to tell them the sad news.

'I am very glad to hear it,' said Monsieur Ballanfah. 'I have a much higher opinion of your young friend now, and you are not to pity her or be foolish and try to make her change her mind.'

'Oh, it would not be any good,' said Marthe naïvely.

'When Muriel says she is going to do a thing she does it.'

There was no time to write and tell Miss Taylor of the result of her permission, for she was to arrive the next day, so that no letters would reach her. She had told them the train she was coming by, and Muriel, it was decided, was to meet her at the station under the care of Madame Laval, who was delighted to have the two English young ladies back again.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### PARIS OLD AND NEW.

'COME, come, things are not so bad as all that, are they, Marthe?' said Monsieur Ballanfah gaily as the girls came in to lunch, Marthe looking the picture of despair; 'or have new arrangements been made, and is Muriel going to join her aunt elsewhere?'

'Do not laugh at me, papa. You know I shall miss her very much,' said Marthe.

'Then are you not going to school after all?' inquired the Professor, turning to Muriel, who looked a little depressed too.

'Yes, she is; but it won't be the same thing. It was the evenings that were the nicest part of the day; and Muriel will always be too busy to come and see me then, and I shall have to do my lessons alone, so they won't be so well learnt,' Marthe wound up crossly.

The good-natured Professor, seeing that Marthe was really unhappy, said kindly, 'Well, well, I should have thought that one learnt one's lessons better alone; but as Muriel evidently inspires you to study, which you never did before, no doubt you will miss her. And now, what is to be done to cheer you both up? Unfortunately, I am obliged to do some business

in Paris, so I cannot take you for a country expedition, unless you would like to come in the fiacre with me; but I fear that will be too dull for you, for I shall have to go into one or two places, and you will have to sit still in the cab.'

'Oh, thank you, papa! Of course we would like to come. Will you take a taxi with a clock?'

'Why, what is the special attraction of a clock?' inquired her father.

'Because it is so nice to see it drop every three minutes. It is quite exciting to guess how long it will be before it drops,' said Marthe, her sadness all gone at the thought of a drive with her father.

'Indeed, I do not find it quite so exciting as you do, considering that every time it drops I have to pay a penny, and it seems to me that time never goes so fast anywhere as it does in a taxi with a clock,' replied the Professor.

'That is the very reason I never take one,' said his wife. 'But where are you going to take the girls, René?'

'To tell you the truth, my dear, I don't know that I had better take them after all, for my calls are not in a very fashionable part of Paris. Perhaps you had better take them,' observed the Professor.

'I am engaged, so I think they must be content to go to the needlework-class at the school this afternoon, and perhaps we can have another expedition on Thursday.'

Marthe looked so disappointed that monsieur said,

'Well, they can choose. I am only afraid that the Place de la Bastille will not be very amusing.'

'Oh yes, the very place I should like to go,' cried Marthe; and then, seeing her father's astonished face, she added, 'Muriel has never been there, and she wants to see the ruins.'

'But there are not any,' exclaimed Madame Ballanfah; 'it was razed to the ground. You ought to have known that, Marthe.'

Marthe looked at Muriel for an explanation, for she imagined that every statement made by her English friend was sure to be right. 'Didn't you say that you wanted to see the ruins of the Bastille?' inquired Marthe.

'I thought there were some stones of the old Bastille that they had arranged somewhere near,' said Muriel doubtfully. The Professor nodded approval.

'Quite right! So there are, on the Quai Celestins, and you shall come and see them this afternoon with me, and so shall Marthe; for it seems to me that this little head needs filling with some of the most important facts of our history,' observed her father, patting her head.

'How am I to know all about where all the stones of all our old prisons and things are to be found?' cried Marthe. 'This little head will just not hold them.'

'Nonsense, Marthe; you know quite well that the taking of the Bastille and its destruction is one of the events that every schoolgirl should know,' said her

mother; 'and you should have known that not a stone of it was left.'

'Never mind, papa shall tell us all about it as we drive along, and I will listen most attentively,' replied Marthe; 'though, as for the Bastille, I have learnt about it. In fact, I know more than you think,' nodding her head. 'I know that the street 14 Juillet is named after it.'

'Named after it!' echoed Muriel, astonished, for she did not see the connection.

'Yes; it was taken on 14th Juillet.—See, papa, I know something that Muriel does not know,' Marthe cried triumphantly.

'I am sure you know lots, and perhaps you can tell why there is another street called 4 Septembre?' replied Muriel.

'*Mon dieu*, no!' said Marthe with a shrug of her shoulders; 'there are such a lot of streets in Paris.'

'Fie, Marthe, you lazy girl!—She only remembers 14 Juillet because it is a national fête, which you will see, Muriel; the 4th Septembre was the date of our last Revolution after Sedan,' said Madame Ballanfah.

'And the proclamation of our present Republic,' added her husband.

'Yes,' added Marthe, nodding her head. She did not care a bit for their scoldings about her ignorance, which she never denied.

'And now, if we are to go, it must be at once,' observed Monsieur Ballanfah, rising from the table, whence he was followed by the two girls, who were

ready as soon as he, and they were all three in the little fiacre in a very few minutes, and driving over the Pont de la Tournelle.

The Professor, who was sometimes very absent-minded, took no notice of the girls once they had started, and Marthe entertained Muriel herself; but when they had crossed the bridge she caught sight of some stones piled up and carefully guarded by railings, and, being quick-witted, guessed that they were the stones of the famous or notorious Bastille. 'Look, Muriel, there they are. Papa is not doing his duty at all as guide, so I must tell you everything.'

'Eh, what? To be sure.—Stop, *cocher*.—Yes, those are the stones, all that remain of the old prison walls. The people had an idea that it was the torture chamber of their tyrants, and the poor little dauphin was given a box of dominoes made out of the marble to play with, to give him a hatred of tyranny.'

'And that pretty house! That must be old, monsieur?' inquired Muriel, pointing to a quaintly ornamented house at the corner of the Rue du Petit Musc and the Quai des Celestins.

'That! Yes, it is part of what once was a royal residence. It is called Hôtel des Lions d'Or. You seem much interested, Miss Muriel; what are you making a note of so busily?' inquired the Professor with curiosity.

'It is only for my aunt to sketch. She likes to

know of quaint bits,' explained Muriel as she wrote down the name of the street in a little book.

'Then we may as well drive up the Rue St Antoine,' suggested monsieur, 'for that is very picturesque.'

'I think Aunt Lu knows that part, for I seem to remember a sketch of some church in it,' replied Muriel.

'Ah, the Church of St Paul! There are a good many old monuments of interest in it—Rabelais for one, and the Man with the Iron Mask for another.'

'Ah, Rabelais! We have just got down to him in our literature lecture—that is, to-morrow; he was *curé* of Meudon. What did he write, papa? Do tell us; it will save a lot of trouble,' said Marthe.

'What trouble—listening to the lecture, I suppose? He wrote satires. One of them is called *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*,' replied the Professor; 'that is the work you will probably be told about. It is the tale of a giant.'

'It sounds great nonsense,' observed Marthe; 'but as we have to learn about him it is just as well to see his burying-place; it helps one to remember.'

'I will tell you something about him which you will not forget. One day Rabelais was at Lyons, and stayed at an hotel there, and then found that he had no money to pay the bill; so, being a very original man, he thought of an original way out of the difficulty. He told the people that he had just come from Italy with a poison to rid them of the king and his children.'

'Of all the silly things to do!' interrupted Marthe. 'Of course they put him in prison. What was the good of that?'

'This much good, that they brought him before François I., to whom he told the tale, and the king and Rabelais both laughed heartily over his *mauvais quart d'heure*, which has become an expression in France.'

'And in England too,' cried Muriel. 'I shall not forget that.'

'So you have got one more writer put into your head,' said Marthe, who talked as if Muriel's head were a cupboard into which goods were to be packed.

'And now, here we are at the Place de la Bastille. If you have any imaginations you ought to be able to entertain yourselves, while I pay my business call, by conjuring up the scenes which took place here at the storming of the Bastille,' said Monsieur Ballanfah as he descended from the fiacre and went into a house near the corner of the boulevard.

'I should dream all night if I were to go conjuring up horrors like that,' said Marthe. 'I would rather conjure up the people dancing on the place after they had pulled it down.'

'I once saw a kind of representation of the storming of the Bastille at a show in London, and it was horrible. There were the people looking half-starved, and shrieking and leaping about in the flames, and then the walls fell in, and they dragged out a man and began beating him.'

'It was the governor,' put in Marthe, forgetting in her interest that she had declined to try to imagine those scenes. 'They killed him afterwards.'

'We did not see that; but they brought out prisoners in chains and looking dreadful, as if they had been ill-used,' continued Muriel.

'Ah, Miss Muriel's imagination is at work, I see; but I should keep to facts. There were only seven prisoners, and they were criminals,' said the voice of the Professor from behind.

'Oh, there you are, papa! She was only describing a show; but I am glad you have come; it was giving me the horrors. Can't you show us something pleasant as well as historical, to make a change?' pleaded Marthe.

'If things went pleasantly there would be no need for history,' observed Monsieur Ballanfah; 'but we can drive along the Grands Boulevards; that is pleasant, and so will a cup of coffee be—eh, young people?'

When they left the older and poorer part of Paris behind, and arrived at the fashionable boulevards, with their stream of loitering, pleasure-seeking habitués, Marthe drew a breath of relief. 'How nice it is here, and how much brighter the people look, don't they, Muriel? But what are you smiling at?'

Muriel laughed. 'I am afraid it will not sound polite; but I was just thinking that some of the people in those old streets that we passed looked as if they could have done such things, and I imagined them

rising again, till I almost felt nervous; and then we turned into these boulevards, and I thought how stupid I was, for the people look so good-natured. And, after all, it was more than a hundred years ago.'

'*Mon dieu*, what horrid things you do imagine!—Papa, we could never have another Revolution, could we?' said Marthe, looking quite uncomfortable.

'Not like that, I should hope; things are much better for the poor. You must remember that there was a famine in the land, and hunger had made the poor wretches savage,' explained the Professor.—'Stop, *cocher;* we get out here.—And now, Marthe, I hope you have seen enough pennies drop to please you.'

'I never noticed after the first,' said Marthe.

'That is a pity, because you will not often have the opportunity of seeing so many—not, at least, if I can help it,' said the Professor as he handed several francs to the cabman.

'Papa, get us iced coffee, please, and do let us sit and drink it on the balcony, so that we can see everything,' said Marthe. 'I would like to come to a café every afternoon. When I am grown-up and married I shall.'

'So that is the effect my taking you to see such serious sights has had upon you!' said Monsieur Ballanfah, looking much amused.—'And is that your idea of happiness too?' he added, turning to Muriel.

'Oh no,' cried Muriel with more warmth than she

was aware of. 'I would spend all my free time in galleries looking at pictures.'

'Well, you would have to take coffee or your everlasting tea—your five o'clock, as you call it—wouldn't you? And I suppose you would rather go and have tea in a nice tea-room where there is pretty music than stop all the time at a picture-gallery,' argued Marthe. 'But no, I am not sure. I remember when we went to the Louvre how you stood and stood till one of my feet after the other ached.'

'I never knew,' said Muriel penitently. 'I forget time, and even that I am hungry, when I am looking at pictures.'

'That shows that you are going to be an artist yourself; you know great artists sacrifice all to their art. Look at the great Bernard Palissy,' observed Marthe, nodding her head.

'Oh, I hope I shall not sacrifice other people as he did!' cried Muriel.

'It is not only great people who sacrifice others. I know some empty-headed people who stand looking at shop-windows—or shopping, as they call it—for hours, sacrificing their poor friends,' said Monsieur Ballanfah slyly.

'Oh, now, papa, I did not know you were listening. And that was only once, if you mean me,' protested Marthe.

'I never mentioned names,' declared her father.

'But I knew what he meant,' said Marthe to Muriel. 'It was my birthday, Muriel, and he asked

me what I should like best, and I said to go shopping, so he took me to the shops.'

'I did indeed,' said monsieur, shaking his head over the remembrance; 'and how long did we stand outside shops "shopping," as you called it?'

'Only four hours, and he has never forgotten. He said he was so tired when he got home that he had to sit in a chair and do nothing all the evening. Fancy, a man!' ejaculated Marthe scornfully.

'I would rather take a walk of twenty kilometres,' retorted her father.

'Do you really like looking into shop-windows better than looking at pictures?' asked Muriel with some wonder.

'Certainly,' replied Marthe decidedly. 'I like a pretty picture—that of course; but a shop-window is more interesting, because it concerns me.'

Monsieur Ballanfah was buried in his paper again, so the two girls talked on without fear of being overheard; and Marthe continued, 'For instance, if I want a new dress I like to go and look in all the big shops, and see all the different colours and fashions, and think it all out, and choose the trimming and everything; and is that not more interesting than a picture even of a girl who is generally dressed in a robe that is not in the least fashionable?'

'I like to be nicely dressed, but I would like it to be bought for me ready to be put on. I hate going to the dressmaker's, and I like pictures best,' persisted Muriel.

Marthe sighed. 'We are quite different, but that does not prevent your liking me, does it, Muriel?'

'Of course not,' said Muriel.

They were sitting in a very fashionable café on the Grands Boulevards, and Marthe's bright eyes were taking in everything and everybody; and when Monsieur Ballanfah woke up to the fact that they had been there some time, and had long since drunk their iced *café*, he folded up his paper and said they must go.

Marthe gave a great sigh. 'What a pity! Must we really, papa?'

'Why, no, not if you wish some more,' he said kindly. 'I thought you said you would not have anything else.'

'Not to drink. Only it is such a pity to leave this delightful place,' explained Marthe.

'Oh, it's the people that amuse you! Well, it is getting late, and we must be going home, so you must be satisfied for to-day. I should think you had done enough sight-seeing by the way you have been looking about you.'

And so it seemed, for when Marthe got home she was able to describe in detail the dresses of all the ladies she had seen, it appeared to Muriel.

'Then there was the lady in the pale mauve, with that long scarf which fell twisted round her so gracefully.—You saw her, Muriel?' she said once.

But Muriel had not seen her, or at any rate had not noticed her dress.

'Ah, well, you know the lady at the next table to us, in that striking black-and-white.—So remarkable, mamma; only black hat and gloves and waistband; all the rest of her costume white.—Wasn't it picturesque, Muriel?'

'I never saw her. Marthe, you should have told me to look. I did not see any one picturesque,' said Muriel.

'Oh, perhaps not like the pictures you like—I forgot—but what one calls picturesque to-day,' explained Marthe.

But here Monsieur Ballanfah, whom they had not thought to be listening, said, 'Picturesque! If you are talking of the women we saw to-day, I call them ridiculous, and not in the least picturesque.'

His wife laughed at Marthe's face of dismay, and said, 'Never mind, Marthe; I too like to be in the fashion, though I think they are a little exaggerated at present.'

And Muriel, who agreed with the Professor, said nothing.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE REWARD OF SELF-DENIAL.

PUNCTUALLY at the time appointed, Madame Laval arrived to fetch Muriel, whom she was to accompany to the Gare St Lazare to meet her aunt. Muriel was waiting for the Frenchwoman in the entrance-hall, and beside her was a small portmanteau.

'But what are we to take that to the station for?' inquired Madame Laval. 'Ah, now I see; it is your luggage. However, there is no need to bring that with us.'

'But we shall pass the flat, and we could leave it there,' said Muriel, who seemed to be most anxious to take it with her.

'That is true; but I have been thinking that perhaps it will not be needed, for I have received a letter from mademoiselle, who says that you are not coming back to the flat, and that she is glad, because it is much better for you to be with such nice friends,' replied the wife of the *concierge*.

'She does not know that I have decided to come back to her,' said Muriel.

'But it is for your aunt to decide,' protested Madame Laval, who could not understand this independence, and was clearly unwilling to take the

portmanteau; 'and, as you see, she says she prefers you to stay.'

'Well, I am going to stay with her; it is quite settled, madame,' Muriel persisted. 'Do take the portmanteau.'

'It is true, Mademoiselle Taylor said Miss Muriel was to decide,' observed Marthe, who, however much she wished Muriel to stay, wished still more to do everything to please her.

But still Madame Laval hesitated. 'Would it not be better to wait till to-night? If mademoiselle still wishes it, we can easily send a small boy for it. Yes, that will be best.'

Marthe looked eagerly at Muriel, but said nothing.

'No, no, that is just what I do not want you to do; for if my luggage is left here Aunt Lu will think directly that I do not really want to come, and have only offered to stay with her to please her, and she will send me back.'

'And that is quite true, is it not? And since madame wishes to keep you, and also Mademoiselle Marthe, why not stay and be comfortable? It is very well for the good aunt, who has her art for which she lives, and who is older; but it is a hard life for you; and, as the Madames at the school say, you are too young to have all this to do, with your school as well.'

'Come, Muriel, what do you say? There is still time to alter your mind. Your aunt has given you your choice, and seems willing to let you stay, and

I need not tell you how glad we shall be. Miss Taylor does not expect you, you know. Shall I give the order for the portmanteau to be put back into your room?' inquired Madame Ballanfah, taking the handle as she spoke.

Marthe had not said a word, but she looked at Muriel with an expression half-eager, half-curious, and waited anxiously for her decision.

Muriel stood there, her golden curls lying in rings on her forehead, whence she in vain pushed them back. She was a little flushed; and Marthe, who loved pretty things, as has been said, thought she looked lovely.

'Thank you very much, madame; but though I have been very happy here, I should like to go home,' said Muriel. Perhaps there was a little pride mingled with the self-denial, for she did not like Madame Laval to say that her present abode was so much more comfortable, though she knew it was true.

'Very well, then, madame, I think we must let her do as she thinks right,' said Madame Ballanfah, motioning to the wife of the *concierge* to let the little portmanteau be carried into the cab.

'*Eh bien*, if she wishes it, and I have no doubt the aunt will be very glad to see her sunbeam again; and at all events she will have her way,' observed madame good-naturedly, nodding her head.

Marthe said nothing, but she threw her arms round Muriel's neck and said, '*Au revoir*, Muriel. To-morrow I will come and fetch you.'

'Well, Marthe, are you very disappointed? Did you hope Muriel would stay after all?' said her mother, taking Marthe's arm to console her.

'I hoped it, but I did not expect it; and—no, I did not even hope it; because that is why I like Muriel—if she says a thing she does it, she is so strong; and it was nice of her to wish to go, wasn't it, mamma?'

Muriel and Madame Laval, meanwhile, were driving to the flat as fast as the horse would take them, for they had wasted some time in this argument, and they only stopped to put down the portmanteau and drove on, arriving just in time at the Gare St Lazare, where they saw the passengers already descending from the train.

Muriel looked eagerly at each lady who stepped on to the platform, but no Aunt Lu could she see. 'She isn't here after all,' she said in a disappointed tone. 'What can have happened to her?'

'She did not know that we were coming to meet her. Perhaps she has gone to the other end of the train to fetch her luggage,' suggested Madame Laval, who was also anxious; but presently they saw a lady get slowly out of a carriage and walk up the platform.

'Why, how slowly she walks! She must be ill!' exclaimed Muriel.

Just then Miss Taylor saw them, and her face lighted up. 'How kind of you, madame!' she said, shaking hands with the good Frenchwoman after she

had greeted Muriel. 'I am quite glad to have some one to help me with the luggage, for I do not feel very well.'

'No, indeed, you have not a good mien at all. Your holiday has not done you much good, then? Come, let me take your *affaires*,' cried the kind woman, and she armed herself with Miss Taylor's *affaires*, as she called them; while Muriel took the precious portfolio of sketches and the paint-box, of which Miss Taylor was evidently only too willing to be relieved.

Madame chattered all the way about Miss Taylor's bad looks, while Muriel sat beside her saying not a word, but looking very wistfully at her aunt at intervals; seeing which, Miss Taylor said, 'I am not ill. I have been ill. I went for a walk one evening to a little village, and I think I caught a chill, and took no notice at first; and the weather has been very hot, and it gave me a kind of fever. But it is past now, and I have only to rest and I shall soon be well.'

'Oh Aunt Lu, why did you not tell me? I would have come and nursed you,' cried Muriel eagerly.

'That was just what I knew you would do, and so I did not tell you. Besides, there was no danger, nor any need for any one to nurse me. And I did not tell Angelique, so you need not look so hurt, Muriel dear,' replied her aunt.

'But how could you help telling Mademoiselle Angelique, since she was with you?' inquired Muriel,

to whom her aunt had not said anything of Angelique's visit to the château, or indeed anything of her history.

'Angelique was away on a visit for a few days; but she heard I was ill from one of our party, and came back and nursed me,' said Miss Taylor quietly.

Madame Laval looked at her in surprise. She wondered that Miss Taylor did not tell what was to the wife of the *concierge* such interesting news; she did not understand the delicacy which prevented the English girl from talking about the other's private affairs. But if Louise Taylor was reticent the Frenchwoman was not, and said, 'You know that Madame la Comtesse is dead?'

'Yes. I am sorry,' replied Louise Taylor quietly.

Muriel did not ask any questions, partly because she thought her aunt did not wish to talk about it, and partly because she was so interested in her aunt that she had not much thought for any one else; and all the way back she showed in a hundred little ways her anxiety to make Aunt Lu comfortable and keep her from catching cold.

'She is quite a little Sœur de Charité,' cried Madame Laval, observing this.

'Yes; but I am much better now, and able to look after myself,' said Miss Taylor hastily, for she was most anxious that Muriel should not be made uncomfortable at leaving her alone in the flat, nor think it necessary to come there after all.

Muriel did not say anything, but put the cushion again under her aunt's head; and the latter, who was

very exhausted in spite of her efforts, was glad to lay back her head upon it, as Muriel noticed.

And now they had arrived at their destination, and Miss Taylor, with several rests on the way, mounted the many flights of stairs to her flat, followed by Muriel, who was more and more glad that she had decided to stay with her aunt, and especially glad that she had insisted upon bringing her luggage with her as a proof that she had decided to do so before she had seen her aunt.

'Now, Muriel, you may make me a cup of tea, and then you must go, for I do not wish you to stay out late; and, besides, you will be late for dinner,' said Miss Taylor when Muriel had pulled out the easy-chair for her aunt to rest on.

'And *your* dinner, Aunt Lu—what are you going to eat?' inquired Muriel.

'I thought you would begin to worry about that, and I have soup all ready here that I can warm quite well myself. I shall be all the better for a little quiet, we have been rushing about and painting so hard; and now I am going to stop at home and finish my sketches and the picture for the autumn *salon*, so you see you need not trouble your curly head about dinners.'

'Well, anyway, I am going to stay here. I shall be out all day, so you will be quite quiet; and, besides, I am not a child—I do not make a noise. It is all settled; look, there is my portmanteau,' Muriel said, pointing to it in glee.

'But, Muriel, it is not a proper life for you,' began her aunt.

'It's no good your saying that, Aunt Lu, because you know that papa has written to say that he is so glad I am with you, and that it will do me good to rough it a little,' replied Muriel, as she walked off into the tiny kitchen, whence she appeared presently with the tea on a pretty little tray. 'I haven't had a decent cup of tea since you went away, Aunt Lu. They did make me some once or twice at the Ballanfans'; but it was so weak and horrid that I said it was too hot for tea, and so it was for that stuff,' observed Muriel, as she poured out a cup for herself and then one for her aunt, so that the latter might have the best cup.

Miss Taylor lay there quite quietly without energy to do anything, even to show Muriel her sketches; but after the tea she roused herself a little and said, 'If you like to look through my portfolio you may choose a sketch for yourself;' of which permission Muriel gladly availed herself, and, seating herself at Miss Taylor's feet, she began to turn over the sketches in the portfolio, exclaiming at almost each one, 'Oh, what a pretty study!' or 'Oh, I should like this one!' or 'No; this one is still prettier!'

'If you go on like that you will never choose at all, or rather you will choose them all, and that will not do,' said Miss Taylor, laughing; but Muriel was glad to see that she looked better already, and more her old self.

'Well, you see, the difficulty is that I can't make up my mind if I will have one of those peasants, or a bit of a church, or that "corner of Normandy" that is very pretty; and then, ah yes, here is the "Tour de la Pucelle." So you did manage to make a picture of it after all, and it looks very grand against those old houses! Yes, I think I would rather have that, because I admire Joan of Arc. No, I don't know; perhaps the best way will be to put aside the ones I like best, and then choose.'

'At present you seem to like them all best,' said her aunt dryly; but she was flattered nevertheless, as was natural, at the whole-hearted admiration of her young niece, whose love of art she herself had fostered.

'To be sure, so I do,' said Muriel, as she regarded the pile of those to be chosen from. 'Well, I must weed them out;' and so in the weeding-out process the two talked, and Miss Taylor told Muriel much about the architecture of the beautiful Cathedral and the still more beautiful old churches of Rouen, and described the dresses of the peasants and the scenery of the places in Normandy to which she had been.

And then Aunt Lu began to speak of Angelique and the way she had nursed her. 'You would not have known Angelique, she was so quiet in my sickroom. It is strange how one misjudges people who have not the same ideas as one's self!' she said musingly.

'Yes, that's just what I have found out,' observed Muriel, nodding her head.

Her aunt laughed. 'And, pray, how did you find that out?' she inquired.

'By Marthe. I could not quite get on with her at first, because she is so different from me; but now I like her all the more for that, though she thinks quite differently from me about lots of things. Now, you needn't laugh, Aunt Lu. I mean she has been taught to think differently about things. How is it, Aunt Lu, that just that little bit of sea should make such a difference between us?'

'Well, dear, it is the difference between the Latin and Anglo-Saxon races, we are told; but it does seem funny, and I have learnt a great deal from Angelique.'

'Not in painting, Aunt Lu!' protested Muriel.

'Yes, in painting too; though I did not mean that,' replied her aunt.

'Why, you paint far better than she does!' cried Muriel indignantly.

Louise Taylor shook her head. 'I paint better sometimes, because I take more pains and study more carefully; but she is a far better artist. I think that one day she will be a great painter, and I am sure Monsieur Goupil thinks so too.'

'I like your paintings ten thousand times better than Mademoiselle Angelique's. I like to look at yours when I am tired or cross, and they make me feel rested; but hers never do,' declared Muriel. And her aunt looked up in astonishment at the shrewd criticism, for this was much what the master, in other words, had said.

'I think Angelique will paint pictures that you will like better now. In fact, she has already painted one that will rest you, as you call it.'

But when the light began to wane Miss Taylor started up and said, 'Oh Muriel, I have been very selfish! I have forgotten that we ought to see about your dinner, and now it is too late for you to go out and get it. We must ask Madame Laval to be so kind for once as to do our shopping for us.'

'It's all right, Aunt Lu. I have seen to all that, and it is cooking itself,' said Muriel composedly. 'So just lie still and don't worry about it.'

'But how—what is cooking itself? You must not begin to neglect yourself, Muriel. I am afraid you have made a sacrifice in coming back to this tiny flat, and will regret it,' said her aunt rather anxiously.

'You wait and see. I am not going to neglect anything. And, oh, Aunt Lu, if you knew how glad I am to be home!' cried Muriel, giving her aunt one of her rare caresses.

'Are you sure, Muriel? Then I don't mind telling you that I was rather dreading coming back to be here alone. I am still weak from the fever, and I think it has left me nervous. So we are both glad.'

Presently Muriel got up and went into the kitchen, shutting the door after her. Miss Taylor, who was more poorly than she would allow, lay back with her eyes shut, and paid little attention to the sounds in the next room, and only lazily opened them when she saw Muriel come in again and lay the cloth for

herself, as she thought. She was still lying there with her eyes shut when a voice said, '*Mademoiselle est servie;*' and, looking up, she saw an appetising little dinner arranged on the little table.

'But, Muriel, where did you get all this? And how did you manage?' she exclaimed in astonishment, for there were boiled potatoes, a tiny joint, and a custard-pudding, and the fruit and salad without which no French dinner is complete. 'But on our little spirit-stove—it is impossible!'

Muriel laughed, well satisfied. 'Yes, so it would be; but Madame Ballanfah has given me a dear little stove which almost cooks by itself.'

'Did she buy all these things?' inquired Miss Taylor, not quite pleased at this last idea, for she felt that she was accepting too much from her kind friend.

'Oh no. I came this morning, and got all these before I went to school; and that is how I am going to do now, because then I shall have more time for my lessons in the evening. But, Aunt Lu, don't put on that face of distress! I have learnt a lot of French while you have been away, and I shall be learning while I watch that the things do not burn,' Muriel assured her.

'But what about this prize-giving? I thought you had to do extra work for that, and were only to be allowed to take part on condition that your usual lessons did not suffer.'

Now, this was the one sacrifice—a small one no doubt, but still a sacrifice—which had cost Muriel a

good deal to make; but she did not wish her aunt to know it, so she answered indifferently, 'Oh, the prize-giving! That is not very important. I don't know yet whether I shall be able to take part or not, but I don't much care;' which was true so far that she cared so much more to be with her aunt, and to take care of her, that the other thing for the moment seemed to be of little consequence.

Miss Taylor did not say anything, but she guessed the truth; and the next day, when Madame Ballanfah and Marthe came to inquire after her, and expressed their sorrow at her pale face, Miss Taylor said how sorry she was that poor Muriel should have to take care of her.

'It seems to be Muriel's fate to have to look after other people,' said Miss Taylor. 'She was her mother's nurse for very long, and now here am I ill, and giving her more nursing to do,' she said with a sigh.

'My husband says that it is excellent training for a young girl, and I wish Marthe was half as clever about domestic matters. Muriel is wonderful; she has quite a talent in the arranging of a dinner. She once cooked us our dinner, with Marthe's help; but I think that the latter was more a hindrance than a help; and it appears they argued about every dish, because Muriel would do it the English way, which she knew, and Marthe wanted to do it the French way, which she did not know.'

Miss Taylor laughed, and then she mentioned the

matter of the prize-giving. 'I do not want Muriel to miss it if I can help it,' she said.

'I will speak to the directrice, and I am sure she will arrange that Muriel shall take part as an exception,' said Madame Ballanfah as she took her leave.

She walked home with Marthe, who expatiated all the way on Muriel's unselfishness. 'I do think she has no faults—at least, almost none, mamma. Don't you?' she inquired as she hung on to her mother's arm.

'I should not quite say that,' said Madame Ballanfah, who had not the same exalted idea of Muriel's perfections as her daughter, and who, though she liked her immensely, knew the pretty English girl to be very self-willed and quick-tempered; but she left Marthe to her hero-worship, which was not to be disturbed. And with her usual good-nature, she arranged matters with Madame the directrice so that Muriel was allowed to take part in the much-looked-forward-to prize-giving.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY.

'OH papa, you are too good!' cried Marthe to her father one morning, nearly strangling him in her gratitude and excitement.

'*Halte là!* If you choke me I shall not be able to take you to see the festivities of 14th Juillet, and then where will you be?' expostulated the Professor, trying to free himself from his demonstrative daughter.

Marthe calmed down at last, and began, 'Of course Muriel can come too, papa, and Aunt Lu?' For so Marthe had taken to calling Miss Taylor.

'Of course, or I do not suppose you would care to go with your old father and mother,' retorted the Professor.

'Oh papa, you are not old, and mamma is quite young! But I should not enjoy it so much if Muriel did not come; she does so want to see the decorations and dancing on the 14th. May I tell her at once?' asked Marthe.

'Not at once, seeing that she is not here; but the minute you see her,' agreed the Professor; 'for if you didn't she would wonder what was the matter with you, you are so excited. You might take a lesson in calmness from Muriel.'

'I don't believe Muriel will be any calmer than I when she hears the news, for she wants so badly to go all round Paris. And Aunt Lu says it is too rough for two ladies alone, and she gets nervous in a crowd; and Muriel declared that she should stand on her balcony and try and see all she could from there; but I told her the decorations and the balls were the best things to see, and that she would have to go for a walk to see them. She was quite *désolée*, so you will see that she will jump for joy like me.'

Although Muriel did not jump for joy, as Marthe had prophesied, she was just as glad, and showed it by colouring, as she always did when she was very much moved, and her eyes grew very blue as she answered, 'Oh Marthe, thank you so much! I shall always think of you when I think of the pleasant part of my visit to Paris, for you have thought of all sorts of pleasures for me.'

Marthe's face overcast, and tears came into her eyes; seeing which, Muriel asked hastily, 'What is it, Marthe? Have I vexed you? Oh, I see; it is because I have talked of the time when I shall not be in Paris any more. I am sorry I spoke of it, but it does not make the time come any nearer really, does it? And it may be years off, so why do you cry, Marthe?'

'Because I do not want you ever to go away,' said Marthe, drying her tears.

'Come, children, don't be foolish and quarrel.—Muriel, what have you said to annoy Marthe?'

inquired Miss Taylor, coming into the room at that minute.

'I only said that I would always be grateful to her, and that seemed to remind her that I should go away some day,' said Muriel, half-inclined to laugh.

'But I did not come to cry, Tante Lu. Papa invites you and Muriel to come and see the festivities on 14th Juillet; we are to start quite early, and make a tour of the whole town,' said Marthe.

'But no omnibuses are allowed to go along the chief streets,' observed Miss Taylor, after she had thanked Marthe for the invitation, at which she was pleased more for Muriel's sake than for her own.

'Oh, but we are going to have a carriage for part of the way, and then we must walk, it is true; but you will see papa will not let you get into a crowd or be too tired,' explained Marthe, as she nodded energetically and went off to school.

So full was she of the 14th that to every one she met she imparted the information that she was going out with Aunt Lu and Muriel to see everything. 'And we are going to stay out till midnight to see the fireworks, papa has promised; so if we are late the next day no one need be surprised.'

Of course Maud heard the news, and Marthe overheard her saying to Muriel, 'You will be sure to write down all the things that strike you as most interesting, won't you?' And Muriel replied, 'Yes, I will; but I am not nearly so good as you are at describing things; your descriptions are like a book.'

'Oh, that is only because I am used to trying to describe things. My father is a writer, and I send him descriptions for his paper; that is why I want to know all about the 14th,' replied Maud honestly.

The conversation took place in the recreation-ground, and did not seem to be private, so Marthe did not think at first that she was doing any harm in listening; but she wondered whether Maud would like her (Marthe) to hear her private affairs, so she was just moving away when she heard Muriel say in a tone of regret, 'What a pity that you cannot go and see all the decorations and balls! We are invited to go by Professor Ballanfah, or I would like so much to go with you. Never mind, I will do my best to tell you everything about it.'

Marthe was sure now that the two had no idea that she was near, and she walked slowly away without letting them see her. The fact was, Marthe could never see Muriel talking to Maud without a feeling of jealousy, and seemed in spite of herself to be drawn to whatever spot they might be in, not with the intention of listening to their conversation, but just to be near.

Poor Marthe was very uncomfortable after hearing Maud's great desire to go to the national fête, for she knew that she had only to ask her father and he would willingly take her; there was plenty of room in the carriage, and Monsieur Ballanfah and his wife were most kind-hearted and hospitable people, and would not care if one or two more were added to the

party. But—and this was what troubled Marthe—she did not want Maud to come. In the first place, she did not like Maud, who was of a very cold nature; and, in the second place, she wanted Muriel to herself as usual.

So the day passed uncomfortably, and Muriel said as they were going home, 'I can't think what has come over you, Marthe. This morning you were so excited that you did nothing but laugh and joke, and this afternoon you say scarcely a word. I suppose that is the French character.'

'I wish you would not talk like that; it is so stupid. As if we had all the same character! You are sometimes gay and sometimes *triste*, and why should not I be? Do you really like Maud very much?' added Marthe with apparent abruptness.

Muriel looked a little annoyed. 'Oh Marthe, is that it? I do wish you would not get miserable every time I speak to Maud, and if you had heard her speaking to-day you would like her better than you do,' she said.

Marthe very nearly said that she had heard her; but she thought it would vex Muriel, so she only inquired, 'Why?'

'Because she was telling me about her family, and her father, who is not strong, and writes for a paper; and Maud sends him little bits that she thinks will interest him for his column; it saves him trouble, she says. I liked her better to-day than I ever have before, which is a pity, because she is going away at

the end of the term, as her parents are not rich enough to keep her at school any longer.'

'Oh, I am so sorry!' said Marthe impulsively. 'And, Muriel, I heard a little of your conversation, but I moved away as soon as I saw that you did not know I was near,' she put in, for fear Muriel should think she had been eavesdropping. 'And I heard her say that she would like to see the grand doings on the 14th, and I think papa will be very glad to take her if you would like her to go.'

'But you, Marthe—you do not like her,' objected Muriel.

Marthe made a little grimace. 'I have seen girls that I like better, but I do not dislike her so much now that I know all that you have told me; and, besides, it is nice to show our national sights to people who are so interested in them, so I will ask papa to-night, and I am sure Madame the directrice will let Maud come with us for the day, and stay the night, for it will be too late for her to go back to the school when we return.'

'Marthe, I liked Maud better this morning than I had before; and this afternoon I like you better, and I have always liked you much the best,' said Muriel in one of her rare bursts of affection.

Marthe felt that she was rewarded for the sacrifice she had made. Truth to tell, the thought that Maud would only be at school for a fortnight more helped to make it easier, and she returned to the school the next morning with the invitation in her pocket, which

was received with such gratitude that Marthe felt quite glad she had given it, and was almost as pleased as Muriel that Maud should be coming with them.

So it was a very happy party that started off in a carriage to make a round of the principal boulevards to see the decorations.

'It 's better than our Coronation decorations,' said Maud, as they passed along the Boulevard St Germain and stopped for a moment to look up the long Boulevard St Michel, which had a scheme of its own, all flags and electric lights, and was even at this hour thronged with students.

'Marthe, why does your papa know so many artists?' inquired Muriel. 'All those young men with the velvet-tasselled caps take them off to him.'

'Those are university students, like your Oxford and Cambridge boys, who, you told me, had funny caps too. What makes you think they are artists?' demanded Marthe, turning astonished eyes upon her friend.

'Well,' said Muriel, hesitating, 'I don't really know, except that they look rather artistic; but they have different-coloured ribbons round their fools' caps. What does that mean—the different colleges?'

'No; those colours differ according to their studies. The law-students have violet, and so on. But what was that word you used just now to describe their caps?' asked the Professor, answering her question.

'It was not the right word to use,' interposed Miss Taylor hastily; 'but Muriel only meant that their

caps are a little the shape of a fool's cap, only that is stiff and stands up, and this hangs over.'

'Well, they very often are fools' caps, to judge by the conduct of their wearers. Look at those foolish students!' he exclaimed, pointing out a party of youths who were carrying one of their number shoulder-high and introducing him to everybody as a distinguished foreign royalty, at which everybody laughed; and somehow the way they did it was so *drôle* that even the three English girls and the Professor laughed when they came up to the carriage, and, having stopped it, proceeded with the same nonsense.

'Little things please little minds. Is that not what your proverb says?' he demanded as the carriage passed on, to make its way slowly through the crowded boulevards and across the river Seine, where for the moment the fun was less fast and furious; and as they passed the Church of St Germain l'Auxerrois, the Professor, addressing Maud, said, 'I suppose you know this church?'

'Yes; it was from here that the tocsin gave the signal for the Massacre of St Bartholomew. I know it was called the Royal Church, I suppose because of being opposite the Louvre,' replied Maud.

'It has seen many changes. It was a hospital during the Revolution, and it was shut for six years during the last century, and nearly pulled down; but Chateaubriand saved it by his entreaties. St Landry, the good bishop who built the Hôtel de Dieu

and sold all his possessions, even to the furniture of his house, to give food to the starving poor, is buried here; and Malherbe, who ought to be living now to hear Marthe talk French,' said her father.

'Why, what do you mean? Why should he hear my French?' asked Marthe.

'Because he would correct you. He was so particular that even when he was dying he corrected the bad grammar of his servant, saying he would defend the purity of the language to the end,' said her father, nodding at her.

'I am very glad he is not here,' said Marthe, nodding back at her father.

Maud was writing in her little note-book, which she never went out without, and which was a great joke against her among her schoolfellows. The Professor, on the contrary, took a great interest in her, and said, 'Jean Cauvin, whom we know as Calvin, lived in the cloister which formerly surrounded the church, with his uncle (a locksmith), till he went to Geneva.'

Muriel exclaimed, 'I thought he was a Swiss. Fancy, Calvin a Parisian!'

'My dear, you will not see anything of the fun if you are writing all the time,' protested Madame Ballanfah, who could not bear to see Maud so serious.

But her husband interposed. 'That is our young friend's way of enjoyment, and I am inclined to think she will see more than any of us; she has seeing eyes. Now, this is St Roch, on the steps of

which Napoleon stood and ordered the first cannon to be fired upon the Royalists, and thus stayed a counter-revolution; and before this church the *charrette* of poor Marie Antoinette stood amid the curses and insults of the mob as she went to the guillotine. You should go in one day; there are some fine monuments and statues.'

'I hope it does not bore you, my being so interested in French history?' said Maud, for she saw Marthe yawning as her father began to talk 'architecture,' as she called it, when he spoke of churches and their monuments.

'No, no; I like it too, and everything about Marie Antoinette interests me,' said Marthe eagerly.

'Well, it was near here that the carriage in which she was to escape waited that night when she lost her way, and did not dare to ask. Perhaps if those precious hours had not been lost they might have escaped, and history would have been changed. Who knows?' said the Professor.

'Dear, why are we coming down this street?' inquired Madame Ballanfah as they went along the Rue St Honore. 'There are no great decorations here.'

'To tell the truth, I drove down here for my own pleasure. I wished to show Miss Maud some houses of literary interest to her and to me.—First, you know Molière was born in this street, and Dr Guillotin'——

'Yes, poor man, it is enough to prevent one trying

to be humane to think how his name has been used,' cried Marthe.

'I hope you will not be deterred by that, Marthe,' said her father, laughing. 'In Rue St Roch, Corneille lived; and the late Monsieur Victorien Sardou, our dramatist, had the door of Corneille's house, and kept it as a memento of his great predecessor. Another friend of Marthe's lived here—Monsieur Robespierre.'

'For shame, papa! You know I disapprove of him,' said Marthe; and as her father and Maud went on talking about the celebrities who had lived in or near this street, she began to talk to Muriel; while Madame Ballanfah and Miss Taylor, who were great friends, talked together; and at last they turned out of the long, narrow street, to Muriel's joy, and went round by the Madeleine to the Grands Boulevards.

'One always feels a kind of cheerfulness come over one when one gets into these boulevards, doesn't one, mamma?' inquired Marthe.

'It is always gay on the boulevards,' agreed Madame Ballanfah, 'and at this minute I am very glad to see them, for I wish for some lunch, and I am sure you must all be very hungry.'

'Very well, we will get out as soon as you see a restaurant which pleases you; but I warn you that you had better drive as far as you can, for after this you will have to walk if you wish to keep on the Grands Boulevards,' said her husband.

'We will go to the Café de la Paix, and walk from there,' said madame; 'it is really too hot to drive in

the sun; we can at least walk in the shade. Besides, all this music'—there were bandstands at all the spaces, and bands playing, and writers of songs selling their own compositions after singing them—'makes my head ache, and I shall be glad to get out of the streets for an hour.'

So, to Marthe's secret relief, they left the carriage and went into the café to lunch; after which they continued their walk along the gaily decorated boulevards as fast as the crowd would let them, for they wanted to see the sport on the Seine.

'It's a mercy that Maud wants to see the sport on the river,' said Marthe confidentially to Miss Taylor, 'or papa would have perhaps taken us all over Paris talking dates and things.'

However, Maud, as well as the rest of the party, did want to see the quaint and ancient sport, and the long, narrow boats, with their crews, armed with odd square oars, tilting one against the other; a man in each boat, on a platform at the bow, with a breastplate and armed with a long spear, tilting at his opponent, his object being to send him into the water, the stronger man succeeding. It was very pretty and amusing, and the boatmen were fine specimens of humanity, and this part Marthe enjoyed better than the drive.

It seemed to Muriel as if she were at a pantomime, with all the music and songs and shouts, and gaily dressed people, many in fancy dress—*déguises*, as the French call it—and the bedecked streets. 'I never

saw such crowds before. Did you, Aunt Lu?' she inquired.

'Yes, at the Jubilee; but I do not think we could get up this excitement every year, as the French do,' Miss Taylor observed.

But by the end of the evening, after they had seen several balls, as the Parisians call them, the one outside the Hôtel de Ville being very fine, the three English girls felt still more that they were not capable of undergoing such prolonged excitement, and watched Marthe with wonder as she danced at each street corner that she passed where there was dancing (always with some girl or an acquaintance), and who was as lively as possible when the fireworks went off at midnight.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### AN ENGLISH PICNIC.

IT was two very languid pupils who made their way to school rather late in the morning, and, starting just about the same time, as it happened, met at the door.

'Ah, Muriel, I did not call for you, for I thought that you, like Maud, would be there quite early,' cried Marthe upon meeting Muriel on the steps.

'Not I. I am so tired! I do not think I have ever been so tired before. You don't mean to say that Maud has gone on before you?' replied Muriel.

'*Mon dieu!* not only has she gone to school, but she was up at six o'clock this morning, the *bonne* says, writing hard. Of course it was the notes for her father; and we did not go to bed till one o'clock, so she cannot have had more than four hours' sleep. What industry, is it not?' exclaimed Marthe.

'It is very good of her. She is devoted to that delicate father,' said Muriel; and added musingly, 'I wonder why one does not like people more for being good?'

'But one does. I admire Maud more than ever,' protested Marthe.

'Ah yes, admire! So do I, but I shall not be in the least sorry when she goes. And I do not

think she will be missed at all, except by Madame Vincent; and that is only because she is such an enthusiastic pupil, and asks such a lot of questions. Still, I do like to talk to her,' said Muriel, checking herself.

Marthe did not say anything, but she was evidently very pleased at this information, and was in very good spirits all day, the meaning of which Muriel did not at first understand, but which later dawned upon her. It made her think of all that Marthe had done to make her stay agreeable, and when she went back to the little flat she had a plan in her head whereby she could return a little of Marthe's kindness. Fortunately Miss Taylor was at home and painting in the studio, and to her Muriel went with her idea.

'An idea! About this picture?' inquired her aunt, who was engrossed in her occupation. 'I too have an idea, and that is that I must not paint much indoors in this weather, for I get a headache at once.'

'Then my idea will just suit you, for I want you to give a picnic—a real English picnic—in some wood. I know one should not want to return every kindness that is shown to one; but I should like before the term is over to ask Marthe to come somewhere with us, not us to be always going somewhere with the Ballanfahs,' said Muriel.

'You may certainly ask Marthe to come to spend the day in the country with us if you like; but why

not go to a restaurant comfortably? French people always do that; at least, it is more "the people" who have picnics,' replied her aunt, putting down her paint-brush to talk to her niece.

Muriel looked very disappointed. 'It's so dull going to a restaurant, and I do get so tired of French dinners!' she said with a sigh.

'Oh Muriel, it is supposed to be the best cooking in the world!'

'Well, I dare say it is, and I don't mean that I did not have very nice dinners at the Ballanfahs'; but'—with a laugh—'though I know it is absurd, I was glad to come back here and to have plain potatoes boiled in water, which Marthe thinks so odd.'

'You can't boil potatoes at a picnic, and Marthe would not appreciate them if you could; and as the picnic is to give Marthe pleasure, perhaps it would be as well to ask her which she would like best. Do you remember your English tea, and the struggle Marthe made to drink it?' suggested Miss Taylor.

'Yes,' laughed Muriel; 'but a picnic is different. Still, I will ask her which she likes best. And now the question is, where shall we go? Do you know any pretty wood near Paris?—not the Bois de Boulogne, of course, nor St Cloud, nor Meudon; we have been to all of them.'

'What do you say to Vincennes—I thought you asked me to take you there one day?' inquired Miss Taylor.

'But that is a château, an historical place, and

Marthe hates history. I want to go to a wood. Marthe loves trees,' objected Muriel.

'I meant the Bois de Vincennes. It is a beautiful wood, and there is a very pretty restaurant, that looks like a *châlet*, on the banks of a picturesque lake in the middle of the wood—or forest, as it is sometimes called—which I am sure would please Marthe better than a picnic. However, do as you like. Do you wish to ask any one else?'

'Well, if we go to Vincennes, I think it would be kind to ask Maud, for she would like to see the château, and I dare say Marthe won't mind if we spend the rest of the day in the wood; but I will ask her, and also whether she would prefer an English picnic or a lunch at the lake restaurant. I do hope it will be the picnic, for I want to make everything myself.'

'Cook the food, do you mean? Why should you want to do that? It is much too hot to do more cooking than is necessary,' protested Miss Taylor, who had arranged matters so that Muriel had very little of that to do, Madame Laval willingly doing most of it at the same time as she did her own dinner.

'I want to show Marthe what a pie is like,' explained Muriel, whose weakness it was to want to show off her talents, and who was very good at pastry-making.

Miss Taylor said no more. When Muriel took an idea into her head, as has been seen, it was not easy

to get it out; but she privately hoped that Marthe would choose the ordinary lunch.

Angelique de Ségur was to return that day, and Muriel begged to be allowed to go to the station with her aunt to meet the French girl.

'Perhaps she will not want any one, as she is coming from her grandmother's funeral,' said Miss Taylor, hesitating, for she was very shy of intruding on the grief of another.

But Muriel had other views, and very decided ones, on the subject. 'She will be all the better pleased to see us, you will find. French people do not like to be left alone with their troubles.'

'Indeed! And what do you know about French people after three months in Paris, pray? However, as I think you are right about Angelique, we will both go and meet her.' And so they did.

When Muriel had met her aunt she had not recognised her at first, and the same thing happened with Angelique, for a different reason.

'Aunt Lu,' the girl cried in awestruck tones, after they had gazed at all the passengers who got out of the train, 'can that be Angelique — that lady in widow's weeds?'

'Yes, I expect it is; only, one cannot be sure, because the veil is so thick. But that is not widow's weeds. The French always wear that long crape veil hanging down in front and crape half up their dresses for all near relations. It must be very hot.'

'It is frightful, and it does not seem like Angelique

at all. I shall not know what to say to her,' said Muriel, hanging back when her aunt went forward to greet her friend.

But it was indeed Angelique, who threw her veil on one side, and, kissing them both, cried, 'Why, Muriel, how you have grown!—And, Aunt Lu, how are you?—Did she tell you how I saved her life with strawberries?'

Evidently Angelique did not want to be condoled with, or perhaps she saw Muriel's face of alarm, for she was quite cheerful till they reached the flat, when, on the two Lavals condoling with her, she replied, 'Yes, the dear *grand'mère*, she died quite peacefully and happily. I was glad to be there.' There were tears in the girl's eyes as she spoke, but ten minutes after she was quite gay, and did not cry once, as Muriel observed.

So Muriel, taking courage, invited her to the picnic, an invitation which was at once accepted. 'Not one of your sandwich-picnics, I suppose?' Angelique asked.

Muriel and her aunt exchanged glances. 'I think Marthe is to choose,' said the latter, with a smile.

'Oh, well, I know what that will be,' observed Angelique; but she would not say what she meant, so Muriel had to wait until she found an opportunity of asking Marthe, which was at the first recreation they had.

'A picnic—and in a wood? How perfectly delightful! I shall love it, of course,' cried Marthe, 'and especially at Vincennes, for I have often heard of it,

but have never been there. I only know of the fair and the long market; and, besides, there is a château, which makes it more interesting. Oh yes,' as Muriel looked a little surprised, for Marthe had said just the opposite at St Cloud, 'indeed I do like châteaux; it is only that I do not like too much of it; and just that week when we went to St Cloud I felt a little tired of guides and dates, but I really am very proud of my country and its history.'

This being Marthe's mood for the moment, Muriel was glad that Vincennes had been decided upon, and continued, 'I am so glad you like a picnic. Aunt Lu declared that you would far rather have a stupid lunch in the *châlet* by the lake'——

'Oh, how lovely!' cried Marthe again. 'Shall we lunch in a *châlet* by a lake in a wood? That will be one of the happiest days of my life.'

'But, Marthe,' objected Muriel, a little puzzled, 'which would you like? The picnic is lunch on the grass; a lunch in a *châlet* is not a picnic.'

'No? But of course I will do whichever you wish. I have not understood. I thought you were going to picnic in the *châlet*. If you wish to eat on the grass I will certainly do so too,' said Marthe politely.

'But which would you like best: to eat in the *châlet* at a table as you do every day, or on the grass?' persisted Muriel.

For some time Marthe declined to choose, declaring that she would prefer to do whichever Muriel liked best. However, at last Muriel persuaded her to say,

explaining that 'it is just the same to us; we only want to do what you like best this time. If we prefer to lunch on the grass, we can do that as often as we like this summer, for we are going to spend it in the country.'

'Then, if you are sure you do not mind, I should like the *châlet*,' said Marthe.

Miss Taylor smiled. She knew well enough that it was not usual for the better classes to 'picnic' on the grass in France, and she herself did not much care for the idea. Muriel, she knew, was quite indifferent to the opinion of her neighbours, but she did not like to make any objection, hoping that Marthe would do so, as turned out to be the case.

Mademoiselle Angelique, after all, could not come. Monsieur Goupil had sent for her. So on Thursday, the whole holiday, the other four went off to Vincennes by train, the tram being voted too slow and uninteresting, for it goes through very sordid suburbs.

'Now, which shall it be—the wood first or the château?' inquired Miss Taylor. 'We can take the château on our way back.'

'Oh, the château!' cried Marthe; 'it is full of soldiers, and perhaps we shall see them doing their exercises.'

Maud glanced at her. To the studious English girl, Marthe, with her volatile, pleasure-loving character, was incomprehensible; but at least they were going to the château first, which Maud felt was safer, for they might stay too long in the forest and not have

time to see the château after all; so she too voted for seeing that first.

'It looks like a prison,' said Muriel, 'or a fortress. I don't call it a château; at least, not a palace for kings to live in.'

'It looks like a fortress to you now, because there are soldiers at the windows; but it used to be a palace, I know,' said Marthe.

'Well, why did they put such high walls round? Did they come here when they were in danger?' inquired Muriel.

'*Mon dieu!* we had better get a guide to tell us,' said Marthe with a shrug of her shoulders. 'I know Louis XIV. used to come here with his Court, and it was the most brilliant Court we have ever had,' observed Marthe, who sometimes knew more history than she appeared to do.

'The first thing is to get in.—I see it is not open to the public to-day,' observed Miss Taylor to the soldier at the gate.

'If you send in your card I have no doubt you will be admitted, madame,' said the soldier so politely that Marthe, looking at him as they passed, said, 'That was a gentleman, I should think. He had the accent of one.'

'And do they dress as common soldiers?' cried Maud, with her usual want of tact.

'A soldier is not more common than another man. Every Frenchman is a soldier for two years of his life, if he is not disqualified; and they all serve the

same, unless they mean to be soldiers by profession. There, that soldier is a priest,' she added as they passed another soldier carrying some harness across the courtyard.

The others exclaimed in surprise.

'Yes, yes, they serve like every one else. I knew him by his having no moustache, and by his manner. But there is the guide,' she said hastily, for Maud was beginning to ask many questions, which always worried Marthe, and she was glad of a guide at this moment, especially as he evidently took Maud to be the most intelligent person, and addressed all his remarks to her.

'Aunt Lu, I can't understand half he says; can you?' said Muriel as the guide, having led them to the massive square tower which he called the *donjon*, began to rattle off all his information.

'No; but it does not much matter; we could not retain all these facts and figures. This is the dungeon or prison, and he is at present describing the escape by a rope-ladder of some noted prisoner, but I don't know who it is,' replied her aunt.

'It was the Duke of Beaufort, and the rope was sent him in a *pâte*,' explained Marthe; 'his cousin, the Prince of Condé, was left behind, so he consoled himself by growing flowers, and became a wonderful gardener.'

'Marthe, do tell us what he has just said, Maud seems so interested,' begged Muriel, seeing Maud smile and say, 'Yes, that is very true.'

'I don't know; it was something about Henry V.,'

said Marthe. 'I was not listening. He goes so fast that it gives one a headache to try to follow him.'

'Henry V. of England died here in 1422,' said Maud over her shoulder.

'What did they imprison him for?' said Muriel indignantly.

'No, mademoiselle, he was not imprisoned,' said the guide in French to Muriel, he having understood the word imprisoned. 'He came here as king of France; and, fortunately for us, though'—with a bow and a smile—'unfortunately for himself, he died some weeks before Charles V.'

'Oh yes, I remember, after the battle of Agincourt! How much more real history seems when you visit the places where it has been acted!' said Muriel.

After this they had to climb up the narrow, winding stairs, and see the wretched little rooms where sometimes prisoners and sometimes kings had dwelt; and as they came out Maud said, to the secret joy of all the party, 'I can't remember half he told me. Perhaps Marthe will be able to help me after lunch.'

'*Moi!* I have not heard anything,' said the latter hastily.

'I only remember that Mirabeau and Diderot were imprisoned here, and that Mirabeau wrote essays and letters here,' said Muriel, 'and that is because I have just been learning about them at our lectures.'

'Oh, to be sure, he wrote an encyclopædia—Diderot—and plays,' said Marthe.

'And I think he said that Mazarin was given rooms

in this other part.—Did you not?' she inquired of the guide, as he recrossed the quadrangle with them to show them the chapel.

'*Parfaitement*, madame; in that wing there,' replied the guide.

'Well, that looks more cheerful,' said Muriel.

'It is comparatively modern,' observed Maud, as if that made it unworthy of her attention for a minute; and Miss Taylor understood why the girls did not care for her; she certainly was a prig, though she little meant to be.

'Oh, don't take any notice of what he is saying,' whispered Marthe to Muriel; 'it is only about the two sieges there have been at Vincennes, and you know about them.'

'No, I don't indeed,' replied Muriel; 'but I don't know that it interests me.'

'Why, you *did* them—the allies in 1814–15; but you did not get in,' cried Marthe.

'Oh!' said Muriel, and changed the conversation, for the subject of the victories and defeats of the two countries had proved a thorny subject, and she preferred to avoid it, and admire the beautiful Gothic chapel, with its delicate carving, which the guide alluded to with some justice as *dentelle de pierre*.

'It reminds me of the Sainte Chapelle,' said Maud, and the others agreed.

'Perhaps it was built by Saint Louis too,' suggested Muriel; 'he used to come to Vincennes and sit under an oak to administer justice, you know.'

'No, demoiselles,' said the guide when appealed to; 'this chapel was begun by François I. and finished under Henri II., centuries after the saintly Louis lived.'

'*Mon dieu,* I am glad to get into the wood!' cried Marthe, as, having left the château, they very soon turned into the Bois de Vincennes.

'So am I. That guide was very trying,' observed Maud, to the surprise of the others.

'Guides generally are trying,' observed Miss Taylor.

'Yes; but this one literally galloped through his information. I think he must have had an engagement,' Maud objected, as she threw herself into a seat in the *châlet* and fanned herself with a packet of post-cards with which she provided herself wherever she went, and which, to the surprise of the girls, she never sent away, but hoarded up, as they called it.

'I expect his engagement was to eat his lunch,' said Marthe shrewdly.

'Well, we may forgive him, for we got rather tired and hungry before he had done,' said Miss Taylor, as she looked down the menu, and then read out the different dishes to the three girls.

'Now, Muriel, tell me, do you not really like this better than sitting on the grass, with spiders running over your food, and nothing to lean against except a tree, which is probably dirty?' inquired Marthe.

'I like this better in France, but an English picnic

is much nicer,' persisted Muriel, 'and much more fun, somehow. At least, it is in England; but you make fun everywhere,' she added to Marthe, which was true.

'But this is an English picnic, isn't it?' Marthe inquired with an innocent air.

'No. How can it be? I have explained to you what an English picnic is,' said Muriel.

'Well, I have told all my friends that I was going to an English picnic. You certainly told me so.'

'So it is, if you like,' said Miss Taylor. 'One is not obliged to eat on the ground at a picnic.'

'No; but an expedition like this is not called a picnic. You must take your own provisions with you if it is a picnic,' insisted Muriel.

'Very well, to be correct let us call this an *al fresco* lunch,' said Miss Taylor, laughing.

'And when Marthe comes to England she shall come for a real English picnic,' said Muriel.

'And till then I shall call this my English picnic,' Marthe persisted, nodding her head with a merry smile.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### FAMOUS INK-SPOTS AND OTHER THINGS.

'MURIEL, Angelique and I are going to paint some houses which have special roofs,' announced Miss Taylor to her niece one morning, 'so I shall not be home perhaps by the time you return.'

'Where are these wonderful roofs, and what makes them worth painting?' inquired Muriel. 'And can't I come and find you if you are not back?'

'I don't know; it is rather far. It is in the Place des Vosges,' demurred her aunt; 'and it is the old part of Paris, in which, as you know, I do not like you to wander about alone. I will try to come home as soon as I can this evening.'

'Did you say Place des Vosges? Then I must come—that is, please let me ask Madame Ballanfah to take Marthe and me there. It is where Victor Hugo used to live, and where his museum is now; and we were told by our Professor to go and see it before the next lecture, as he is going to take him as his subject. So I am sure Madame Ballanfah will take us there,' cried Muriel.

'In that case, I shall be very glad to see you. You will find us under the old arcades which surround the square—I can't tell at what point; but the square is always crowded with children, and they will be sure to tell you where the artist is sitting.'

'Why are you going to paint those roofs, Aunt Lu? Are they so wonderful?' inquired Muriel, who imagined they were some picturesque tiles of different reds so dear to the hearts of artists.

'On the contrary, they are slate; but it is not only the roofs that I am going to paint, but the houses. It is the old style of French architecture. We want it for the background of a subject we have been given to paint—an historical picture of a famous duel. They used to take place in this square, and enough remains to give local colour to help us.'

'Oh Aunt Lu, why don't you paint Victor Hugo's house? It would be so much more interesting for it to be the house of such a celebrated man,' cried Muriel.

'I am afraid Victor Hugo cannot be brought into that particular duel.'

'No, of course not, if it is an historical picture; but I dare say other great people lived there before him. Well, if madame will take us, we shall be there early, because the museum shuts at five. So good-bye.'

'It will be so amusing to go, Muriel!' said Marthe, who looked delighted. 'You know his house is full of curious things—caricatures and funny sketches he made himself.'

'But I thought he was a great writer, not an artist!' cried Muriel.

'*Mon dieu!* so he was; but he could draw, as you will see this afternoon.'

'Now, girls, I am ready, and I hope you have your

note-books with you,' said Madame Ballanfah as she came to fetch the girls.

'Note-books!' they cried in unison; 'we never take any with us. Maud is the only girl we know who does that, and it looks so dreadfully learned,' added Marthe with a petulant shrug.

'Very well, then, you must note down in your brains all you see, and you will see a good deal, for it is a large house full of relics of the great writer. Remind me to show you the house where Madame de Sévigné was born in the square, or rather in a house just leading out of it. It was here, too, that Richelieu lived, and here the scene of the comedy you are reading by Corneille is placed.'

'Oh, well, we haven't all that to remember for our lecture. The Professor only told us to go and see Victor Hugo's *musée*,' observed Marthe.

'For shame, Marthe! Do you only learn what you are obliged?' expostulated her mother, shaking her head at her lazy daughter.

'Not at all,' said Marthe, with an attempt at dignity. 'I only wish to do one thing at a time, and do it thoroughly; so to-day I wish only to think of Victor Hugo, and I am sure we shall find enough to think about.'

'I think we shall,' echoed Muriel later on, when, having found the two artists, whose sketches were finished, they all went into the *musée*.

'Mamma, do ask where the ink-spots are,' whispered Marthe to her mother.

'*Comment*,' exclaimed her mother, 'what ink-spots? I never heard of anything of the kind. What can you mean?'

Angelique, who was near, overheard and remarked, 'Oh, I know. You mean the little sketches Victor Hugo made out of blots of ink. They are on the story above, and are very amusing and very clever.'

'Dear me, did your Professor tell you to look at them?' inquired madame.

'No, madame; your Professor told us,' said Muriel mischievously.

'Ah, then, I dare say they are noted,' said his wife simply. And Miss Taylor and her niece exchanged a smile. The former was much interested in the posters for Victor Hugo's different pieces for the theatre and the illustrations for his books.

'Come, Aunt Lu,' Muriel said at last, when Miss Taylor stayed some time poring over the illustrations for *Les Misérables*, 'do stop looking at those miserable pictures.'

'Is that meant for a pun? For if so it is a very'——

'Miserable one,' put in Muriel, laughing. 'No indeed, it was quite by chance; but they are miserable pictures, and you have stared at them so long!'

'They are very clever, but perhaps you will prefer *Le Homme qui Rit?*'

'Yes; but I don't know enough about pictures to stop and gaze at one for half-an-hour as you do; I hope I shall some day,' Muriel replied. 'And if we don't go on we shall lose sight of madame and

Marthe, and they will be finished long before we are half-way through the house.'

Thus urged, Miss Taylor moved on; but she and Mademoiselle de Ségur stopped to discuss the sketches, and their progress up the stairs, which were lined with sketches, was slow; and at last Muriel left them, and, joining Madame Ballanfah, said, 'Aunt Lu and Mademoiselle Angelique are too slow; but they only care for the sketches, so we can go on and look at the relics, and fetch them on our way down. I dare say they will never get any farther than the staircase.'

'Then they will miss some of the best sketches,' said Madame Ballanfah, as they went on to look at the Chinese Room painted by Victor Hugo himself, and at the table on which he wrote, and on which were the inkstands and pens of George Sand, Victor Hugo, and Lamartine, all given for a charity.

'Why, you could buy George Sand's pen for a penny!' remarked Marthe.

'Not that one,' said the attendant; 'you see it is fixed to the table. And if you read you will see it is the only one she could give, because all her others had been given her by some dear friend. Nor did Victor Hugo's cost him much, but what is it not worth now? We have to watch very carefully when people pass through, for many a one would like a souvenir of him.'

'Look!' cried Muriel, 'here is the pen Lamartine wrote fifteen or twenty books with, he says; and this, I suppose, is the inkstand he used all that time

too. It is of red glass, with a gold rim, isn't it?' she said, looking close at it.

'We haven't come to him yet,' protested Marthe, who was giving herself much trouble to avoid learning anything but the lesson of the morrow.

'Lazy thing!' said Muriel, laughing; and soon after they were joined by Miss Taylor and her friend, who had found that they were being left behind, and had at last torn themselves away from the fascinating staircase.

'Now we must be going,' said Madame Ballanfah, 'for it is closing-time; otherwise I could stay all the evening.'

'But, mamma, we have not seen the room Victor Hugo died in!' objected Marthe.

'*Par exemple!* what do you want to see that for? To begin with, it is not here. He died in the avenue named after him,' cried Madame Ballanfah.

'*Pardon,* madame, but the bedroom of the poet is here; it has been removed from Avenue Victor Hugo, and placed here;' and the attendant pointed to a little room.

'How could they carry a room from one house to another?' murmured Marthe.

'They mean the furniture; but it was in this room that he slept when he lived here, so that is quite near enough,' said madame.

And now the patient attendant politely turned them out.

Louise Taylor and Angelique walked slowly home

together, Angelique very quiet for her—at least, quiet in comparison to what she used to be; for since her return from the tour she had been very quiet, and her fellow-students said to each other that l'Ange de l'Atelier must have loved her grandmother very much.

But that was not what had changed Angelique, as Miss Taylor knew, though she did not know what made her so thoughtful sometimes. To-day, however, Angelique suddenly said, 'Lu, if you were me, would you go and live in a dreary old château miles from civilisation, with nothing to do all day but read and work and take solemn walks?'

Lu Taylor did not answer for a minute, during which time Angelique looked impatiently at her; but at last she replied, 'If I were myself I might, but if I were you I do not think I should.'

'*Mon dieu*, what a reply! But I might have known you would be too prudent to help me, and I am so bothered!' cried Angelique, half-amused, half-vexed.

'Well, if you really want my advice, I should say do both,' said the English girl decidedly.

Angelique gave vent to another exclamation. 'Are you joking? Because, if you are, I am not, and I think it—misplaced, as the *maître* says to me when I joke at serious moments.'

'No, I was not joking. I meant, why not go home—for it is your home—for the summer; and then, if your aunts are willing, come back in the autumn?' said Lu.

'And if they are not willing?' inquired Angelique hastily.

'Then I would tell them all it means to you to give up your art, a talent which God has given you, and try to persuade them to let you study for some months.'

'And if they refuse, what then?'

'I do not think they will; but I would not vex that dear old aunt if I were you,' said Louise finally.

'*Tiens*, that is very funny! And you will be amused to hear that you have given me just the same advice that the old abbé at the château gave me; but he was more flattering. He said that such a gift as mine would never be allowed to waste itself, and that one day I should do some great thing,' remarked Angelique.

'I think so too,' replied Louise Taylor quietly.

'Well, then, that settles it. The scholarship is done with,' she announced.

'But why? I thought it was tuition under Monsieur Goupil,' said Louise.

Angelique shook her head. 'I expect you will have that. I have won the other one, and it sends the winner to Italy to study for three years. However, I don't care.'

But Angelique did care, though she did not choose to say so, and her next remark showed it. 'Those sketches by Victor Hugo were wonderfully original. What an imagination he had! It's a grand thing to

have a gift like that, and to leave to one's country such a heritage as he has left.'

'Yes, he might have been an artist if he had had time for both; but he could well be satisfied with his writings.'

'It is easier for a man to do these things, especially in France,' said Angelique with a deep sigh; and then, the sigh having relieved her feelings, she recovered her spirits, and was very lively all the rest of the day, tormenting Muriel by criticising Victor Hugo and his works, especially the ink-spots, which she said were rubbish, and never ought to have been put among a serious collection of souvenirs.

'It is a comfort that one knows you are never serious,' retorted Muriel at last, when Angelique's abuse became extravagant, and Muriel saw that she was not in earnest.

Angelique laughed. 'As I have told you before, it is much easier to laugh than to cry, if people would only think so, and far more agreeable.'

But Muriel had something more important than joking with Angelique to occupy her, as the following conversation will show.

'It is as well it is to-morrow the lecture, for I have seen so much that I could not retain it longer than one day,' said Marthe with a sigh.

'I am rather glad, except for one thing, that the holidays are coming, for I seem to have such a lot to remember. I am afraid I shall not know my part

for the prize-giving; it keeps slipping out of my head,' observed Muriel.

Marthe gave a little laugh. 'As for that, mine cannot slip out of my head, for a very good reason—it has not yet slipped in.'

'Why, Marthe, what do you mean? Have you not learnt your part yet? I thought you had been rehearsing all these weeks,' exclaimed Muriel.

'That is quite true, but we did not learn much during our rehearsals. We have amused ourselves. There is such an amusing girl with us, and she tells us such funny histories of her last school that it is impossible to study; and, besides, she says that they never troubled much about their prize-givings at her last school; it was considered more a day for the babies.'

'But I thought it was a prize-giving for all the school, and that some Professor came to give the prizes, and that we all put on our best dresses and showed how much we had learnt,' said Muriel with surprise.

Marthe looked rather confused. 'Ah, well, that is true, and of course I shall learn my part; but Marie says that all those crowns of paper are so foolish. She does not care if she gets one or not.'

Muriel seemed to be considering, and at last she said with decision, 'I do not know anything about paper crowns. I did not know the prizes were paper crowns; but I am going to learn my part of the scene from Molière properly; and if I am not sure of a

word, Maud will know the whole scene by heart, and will help me; and I should advise you to learn yours, for, if not, Madame the directrice will be very vexed, and you will be ashamed, too, before all the school, I should think. And as for Marie, I should not let her run down your school. She is only a new girl, and I should tell her that she might do as she liked at her last school, but that you don't do so here. Besides, the Professor, what will he think if the girls have not taken the trouble to learn their parts?'

'*Mon dieu!* as for that, last year it was an old monsieur who, I am sure, could not hear anything, and only said "*Très bien*" to everything that was done. However, say no more; I am going to study my part well to-day.'

Muriel had been working hard all the term, and had great hopes of a prize which was given according to the number of marks gained, and not according to examinations; and she had once said to her aunt, 'You see, Aunt Lu, if we had to be examined on what we have learnt I should have no chance, because I could not say it in French, even if I could remember it; but they count up the marks, and Madame Vincent and the other teachers always asked me easy questions; and as I always got *très bien*, which means ten, I must have at least three-quarter marks, and that means a first prize.'

'But there may be other girls who have also got three-quarter marks, if not more?' suggested Miss

Taylor. 'I should not be too sanguine about a prize.'

'Ah, but that does not matter, because we all get first-class prizes if we are above 75 per cent.,' explained Muriel.

'That must be very expensive,' observed Miss Taylor.

'Yes, I suppose it is; but they seem to be very generous at this school,' Muriel had observed; but now that she heard that the prizes were paper crowns she did not wonder that every girl above 75 per cent. got a prize, and was half-sorry that she was so sure to receive one, and so she told her aunt when she got home.

'Paper crowns for prizes!' exclaimed Miss Taylor. 'Then that accounts for my meeting so many little girls with crowns on the last few days! As they were dressed in white I supposed that it was some piece they had been playing in.'

'Well, I think it is a silly idea, and I hope they won't expect me to wear mine, for nothing will induce me to make such an idiot of myself,' said Muriel in a rather disgusted tone; and then she took her play of Molière, which was *Don Juan*, the scene in which the interview between Don Juan and Monsieur Dimanche occurs, and began studying, she being Monsieur Dimanche and Maud Don Juan, which part Angelique took for her.

'I think you know it quite well, Muriel, if you would only pronounce the monsieur better,'

said Mademoiselle de Ségur after half-an-hour's rehearsal.

'I never can pronounce that word. I think I had better say "*sieu*," as Madame Laval does,' replied Muriel.

'I beg you will do no such thing. No educated people say that,' said her aunt; 'but if you put the *m* before it you will get nearer the right pronunciation.'

'M'sieu, m'sieu,' repeated Muriel several times; and so intent was she upon her efforts to acquire a Parisian pronunciation that she did not hear the door open, and was startled by some one saying, with a perfect accent, in her ear, 'Monsieur.'

'Oh Marthe, it is you! Do I pronounce it properly now?' cried Muriel.

'*Mon dieu!* yes, better than I do myself, and you will no doubt obtain another crown for your scene from *Don Juan*, while I shall be covered with shame, for I do not know my part at all well; and imagine what a misfortune—it is my father who will give the prizes away to-morrow!' replied Marthe in melancholy tones.

'How is that? Is the old Professor ill?' asked Muriel.

'What old Professor? Oh, you mean the one we had last year. But we always have a different one, only I never thought it would be papa. He might have told me; I should certainly have studied. But he never said a word, not even when he heard me saying that I wondered who would be asked this year. It

was too bad of papa. And now what am I to do? He will be so ashamed of me,' said Marthe, nearly crying.

'Is that the book, Marthe? Let me hear you say your part; perhaps it is not so bad as you think,' said Miss Taylor, taking the book from Marthe.

Marthe brightened up. 'It is the *Esther* of Racine, and I am Esther, and I begin, "*Mes filles, soutenez votre reine éperdue, je me meurs;*" then I faint.'

'Well, that is very well said. Go on,' observed Miss Taylor encouragingly.

'Alas! that is all I know. When I said that, Marie, who is Assuérus, always said, "All the better; you are dead, so you cannot say any more;" and then we all laughed and amused ourselves.' And Marthe looked half-amused and half-penitent.

But Miss Taylor shook her head. 'You must know some more, Marthe. Try.'

So Marthe tried, but Miss Taylor soon found that it was but too true; she knew very little, though she seemed to catch up a prompt very quickly.

'Now, Marthe, you can't stand up to-morrow and stammer like that before all those people. You must either give up trying to say it, and tell Madame the directrice that you have not learnt it'——

'Oh no, I never can; she will be so vexed and *triste!* Oh dear, what shall I do? Oh, I wish I had not listened to Marie! And before papa, too!'

'Very well, then, the only other thing to do is to work hard all this evening and to-morrow morning

early, and learn it; it is only a short scene, and I think you are so quick that you can learn the words by then; and as for the expression, that seems to come naturally to you,' said Miss Taylor.

'Oh, but papa will wonder why I learn. If I might stay here?' begged Marthe.

'Yes, certainly, and we will take you home by ten o'clock. You have an hour and a half, so you had better tell the *bonne* to go.'

So Marthe sat down and set to work seriously.

'*Mon dieu!* if you two are going on like that all the evening I think Muriel and I will go into my little studio and act our parts,' cried Angelique, after Marthe had been stammering over her part for some minutes.

'But Mademoiselle Angelique, how well you do it!' exclaimed Muriel after they had tried the scene once.

'That is not very surprising. I have already done it at the Madames', and if you play as you have done to-night they will be very satisfied with you, for I know how they like their pupils to recite,' said Angelique.

Before ten o'clock Marthe knew her scene with some prompting; but Angelique, who heard the girl's last attempt, shrugged her shoulders. 'It is shameful, Marthe!' she remarked.

'Aunt Lu, may I come as soon as you are up to-morrow morning?' inquired Marthe. 'I think if you would take the part of Assuérus it would help me.'

And again Miss Taylor said yes. Whereupon Marthe, with a sigh of relief, packed her book under her arm, and said, 'I shall at all events know something about it, and if I stumble, papa will think it is his presence that makes me nervous, for I shall be able to go on if they help me with a word now and then; besides, it will be better than Marie, who does not know anything about her part,' said Marthe, nodding with satisfaction.

'She is a lazy, frivolous little puss, and does not deserve your help,' said Angelique as they parted from her.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE WIND-UP OF THE SCHOOL.

EARLY next morning Marthe, dressed in white and looking very anxious, arrived at Miss Taylor's little flat, with her Racine in her hand, and cried in excitement, 'Alas, Aunt Lu, I am desolated! I cannot remember half that I learnt last night. Oh, do help me, please!'

Muriel, who was only just up, and was making the coffee, called out from the kitchen, 'I will make you a strong cup of black coffee. That will help you to remember.'

Marthe sighed. 'Never again will I play such foolish tricks! Papa said only last night that he hoped I should do him credit—*moi*, who do not know a word of my recitation! He will be angry, you will see, and it is so seldom that papa is angry that one minds.'

'Well, don't waste time, then, but begin at once,' said Miss Taylor. 'No, never mind the first two speeches; you know them.' And so, by dint of scolding and coaxing, she persuaded Marthe to stop bemoaning her ignorance and try to learn her scene.

'Now,' she said when it was time to go to school, 'let me tie your hair-ribbon again, and then we must start.'

Marthe ran to the glass. '*Tiens*, I am all untidy! I must do my hair again;' and she spent so much time over this important operation that Miss Taylor threatened at last to go without her.

Both the girls were dressed in white, such being the rule of the school on these occasions, 'to prevent one girl outvying another in smart dress, and to present a harmonious *ensemble* on the platform,' as the directrice explained to the parents. So for this day Muriel put off her mourning.

'Muriel, you look like an angel!' cried Marthe when Muriel came out dressed to go, for she had never seen her except in her black dress.

'Don't talk nonsense!' said Muriel, laughing and colouring, for she enjoyed Marthe's open admiration and flattery.

'People always imagine that angels have golden hair; but, if you notice, artists have not always chosen this type. The most beautiful angels, I think, have been brown-haired, or at all events had hair quite a different colour from your hair,' said her aunt quietly.

'Whereas they have black hair, as you see,' observed Angelique, touching her own dark locks.

'Ah, you are there, Angelique. I hope you are not coming to the prize-giving,' remarked Marthe with some discontent.

'*Merci bien*, but I am, in order to hiss you if you make a mistake.'

Marthe did not reply, and the four set off for the school, where they were joined by Madame Ballanfah,

and Louise Taylor presently had an opportunity of seeing Angelique in yet another rôle, and that was as the favourite pupil of the good Madames.

On the way they met other white-robed children, and some of them did not at once recognise each other, so great a difference did prettily curled hair and white dresses make from the tightly braided hair and black overalls of everyday.

'Marthe,' cried an agonised voice from within, as they reached the schoolroom—'oh, Marthe, what shall we do? We don't know our recitation at all! It was too bad of you!'

'How too bad of me?' retorted Marthe, turning to speak to Marie, who had been waiting for her. 'It was your fault that we did not learn our *Esther*, and it is I who should scold you, for it is my father who gives away the prizes and makes the discourse.'

'What! Then you are rightly punished. You never told me it was such a great affair, and now I shall be disgraced before every one, and you too,' said Marie.

'I do not know. If you had learnt your part perhaps we might have got through safely; as it is, we shall fail.'

'Considering that you only know the first two lines, I think not. I tell you what. You had better really faint when you say that you die. Yes, there is nothing else to do,' declared Marie, who could not be serious for five minutes, however serious the situation.

'I shall not faint,' said Marthe, nodding, 'but shall do my best; and now do not stop here, for Madame Vincent is calling for all her pupils to come and take their places on the theatre-platform.

With many exclamations of alarm and despair, Marie followed her.

The large *salle* was a very pretty sight, the raised platform crowded with girls of from six to sixteen, all in white, and the background draped with pale blue, while in front of the stage were deep-crimson curtains.

At the two sides were the teachers, all black-dressed women, and in the front row Madame the directrice and Professor Ballanfah, who was greeted with prolonged cheers, not only because he was the greatest lecturer at the University, but also because he was Marthe's father, and therefore in a way belonged to them.

Marthe rubbed her hands nervously, but said nothing.

Muriel looked round for the crowns which were to be the prizes, but saw none. She had been to English prize-givings, and expected to see, instead of a table covered with handsome books, one loaded with a heap of crowns; but neither books nor crowns were to be seen. The books, she had known, would not be there, but she wondered if there were not to be any crowns either, and did not much care, if the truth be known.

But now the ceremony began. There were the

usual songs and little pieces by the smaller children, who had been well coached by their teachers; and then came the elders, who were purposely allowed to choose (under supervision) their recitations themselves, and learnt them alone.

Maud and Muriel came before Marthe and Marie; and the two former descended the steps from their row to the front of the platform, Muriel very nervous, but Maud quite at her ease, and both made their bow and began.

The first 'monsieur' came after a slight hesitation; and Miss Taylor, who was sitting near Madame Ballanfah, could not help smiling; but after that Muriel said it quite fluently and with a very good accent, as Madame Ballanfah assured her aunt.

And then it was the turn of Marthe and Marie, and it is doubtful which of the two was the more nervous. Marie clutched Marthe's arm so tightly as she followed her that Marthe could hardly repress an exclamation of pain, and looked so cross that her father, thinking she was nervous, smiled encouragingly at her.

The two made graceful curtseys, and Marthe announced alone—for Marie had lost her head—'A Scene from Racine's *Esther*,' and then waited for Marie to begin; but not a word came from Marie, so in desperation Marthe said her two lines: '*Mes filles, soutenez votre reine éperdue, je me meurs*,' and pretended to faint.

Still there was no sound from Assuérus, *alias* Marie, until a low voice from the sides prompted

'*Dieux puissants,*' and the girl in faltering tones struggled through her speech, when Marthe took hers up promptly; but it was a very halting affair; and although Marthe only needed prompting once, Marie stopped at every line, and entirely spoilt the recitation. Professor Ballanfah looked at his programme with impassive face; but as they went away he gave Marthe a glance of sympathy, which reassured her.

And then came the discourse, and the Professor stepped forward; and Muriel, who had only seen him at home smiling and making jokes with his wife and daughter, hardly recognised the man, so transfigured was he by his enthusiasm when he spoke of the great men of letters which their country had produced. 'We have the richest literature in the world, and we live in the most beautiful and best-loved city in the world. Let us be proud of the fact, and let the works of the men whom we have heard with more or less pleasure this afternoon: Froissart, from whose history the little ones have recited the tale of the six brave *bourgeois de Calais*, St Bernard (that great genius and saint world-famed), Corneille, Racine (friend of Madame Maintenon)'—the Professor had no more to say of him—'Molière, La Fontaine, Rousseau, Voltaire, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Victor Hugo—they all teach us something by their faults as well as by their works. If we pass through our school course without having acquired a love of good reading we have indeed failed in one of

the objects for which we were sent to school. But there is another object which is more important, and that is a love of duty; and here I should like to pay a tribute to two of your number who at least have not failed in these respects. We can all learn from each other, and they no doubt have learnt something from us; but from them, you, their schoolfellows, can learn a love of duty which I am told is so remarkable in them, and a love of art and letters. I understand that this term fashions have lost their interest, and that the great men of the past and the great events of the past have been discussed as if they were really interesting, and the scenes of historical events have been visited instead, as was the case in former terms, of places of amusement, so that "it has been a pleasure to teach history and literature," as one of your teachers has said; and we have seen how these two girls have steadily worked at their French so as to recite with scarcely an accent a passage from our dramatist, which I thought a most creditable performance and wondered at; but your directrice explained to me that "they would think it their duty to do their best, and they do all so earnestly." Young ladies, that is high praise! To-day I give you as your motto, "Love of Duty and Love of Letters."'

Then the Professor sat down, and there was a little hum of conversation, during which two large tables were brought in by the attendants, covered with books, around which were crowns of white roses,

green laurel-leaves, blue corn-flowers, and red roses, looking very pretty among the books.

'Why, there *are* books!' whispered Muriel to Marthe, who was very subdued, her father's address having been felt as a reproach to her, for she knew that if she had insisted upon it Marie would have learnt her part.

'Of course there are books; they are the prizes,' whispered Marthe back.

First went the little ones to receive their books and crowns—a white crown for conduct, a green wreath of laurel-leaves for study, red roses for sacred subjects, and blue corn-flowers for art; and it was very pretty to see the little girls as each bent her little head to have the crown put on, and as she walked back to her seat with it on her head and a book under her arm, for the teachers managed to give each one a prize; even a tiny mite who really was allowed to come to the school, as an exception, with her sisters, and who only knew her alphabet, received the prize for *gentillesse*. So picturesque did it look that Muriel forgot that it was 'making an idiot' of herself, and went down quite willingly to receive her two crowns of laurel and white roses, and her three books, and never thought for a moment that there was anything odd in having two wreaths on her head, one above the other, till she saw Maud with four, which looked odd above the somewhat severe countenance of the plain English girl.

But Muriel did not look odd; in her aunt's eyes

Muriel went down quite willingly to receive her two crowns of laurel and white roses.

M. PAGE 402.

she looked beautiful; and as Madame Ballanfah murmured the same remark in her ears, she did not consider herself partial in thinking so.

At last all the girls had received a recompense of some sort, and the prize-giving was over.

Good-bye was said to those of the girls who were not coming back, Maud among the number. True to her habit of never letting an opportunity pass of getting knowledge in any way possible, her parting words to Muriel were, 'If you should see anything worthy of note this summer, or when you return to school, you might just send me a short account on a post-card.'

'I will if I have time,' replied Muriel, while Marthe smiled to herself.

And then Miss Taylor and her niece waited till Angelique had been petted and made much of by her old teachers; and then, saying good-bye to Madame the directrice and the teachers for a few weeks, the three went home, accompanied by the Professor and his wife and daughter.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT.

'FANCY, it is four months since I came to Paris!' observed Muriel to Marthe; 'and it seems like four years.'

'Oh, does that mean that the time has been wearisome?' demanded Marthe.

'Oh no; only all that happened before seems so far away, and it has been such a change, that I can hardly believe that five months ago I was so happy in England.'

'But aren't you happy here?' inquired Marthe. 'I thought you loved your aunt so much! Why are you so sad? You know we all love you, and want you near us. I wish I were like you, Muriel; I am so foolish and do silly things, and you always do what is wise,' said Marthe with a sigh.

'Oh, but I don't, Marthe! You must not think so much of me. I did a very foolish thing once, and perhaps if you knew it you would not think so much of me,' said Muriel, colouring, for she felt as if she had no right to Marthe's praises.

But Marthe shook her head. 'I don't believe it, and nothing could make me think you had done wrong.'

'Would you think it wrong of me to run away

from my school and come to Paris all alone?' inquired Muriel.

'Oh Muriel!' cried Marthe, and was going to add that she did not believe Muriel would do such a thing, when some remarks that her father had let fall returned to her memory, and she hesitated.

'Ah, that does shock you!' said Muriel, and added humbly, 'I know it was wrong, and I would not do so now.'

But Marthe said stoutly, 'I like you just the same; and as for running away from your school, it does not matter, no doubt, for an English girl—— Well, I beg your pardon; I did not mean to be rude. And for that matter, look at Angelique; she did worse, and everybody has forgiven her, and the Madames went kissing her as if she were an angel, so I suppose people are not so particular now. And, at any rate, do not let us think about it any more; it was very brave of you to tell me, and—I like you just the same, and I wish you would love me and be happy here,' she wound up affectionately.

'So I do, and I have been happier than I ever thought I could be again, and I do not know what I should do without Aunt Lu. It is only to-day—I suppose it is because you are all talking about home and your fathers and mothers—that I feel like that; but I am quite happy with Aunt Lu, and perhaps some day we shall have a real home again,' said Muriel, trying to be cheerful.

Miss Taylor was walking on with the Professor

and his wife, and hearing praises of Muriel and of her influence upon Marthe, who, her mother said, had learnt more this term than she had ever done before.

'I am very glad to hear it; but I am very doubtful about keeping Muriel with me. It is too hard a life for a girl, this waiting upon me in our flat, and the flat is quite too small; but we shall see. I have not heard from my brother lately, and so I do not know what he means to do with her. He should be back from his trip soon; but he says he will not take another practice in London, or indeed in England, so I suppose he will be off somewhere as soon as he arrives. I hope he will come and pay us a visit first, and that is why I do not wish to go far from Paris, for I should not like him to come and find us away.'

'I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing him if he comes before we leave Paris,' said Madame Ballanfah politely. 'We do not go for a week yet.'

'Thank you. I do not expect him so soon as that,' replied Miss Taylor; 'in fact, I do not know what to expect, for, as I have said, I have not heard for some weeks; I only know he is on his way home. When he comes I shall try to make him see that he ought to make a home for Muriel soon; it is very hard for the child. It is bad enough when one is my age to have no home, but it is worse for her, and she will leave school in two years. However,

we shall see,' said Miss Taylor, who apparently was feeling the same home-sickness as her niece.

'Yes, it is hard, and I cannot tell you how brave I think you both,' said Madame Ballanfah as she shook hands with the two English girls at the door of the house in Rue de la Montagne de St Geneviève.

Madame was not there in the *concierge's* lodge, to Muriel's disappointment, for she wished to show the *concierge's* wife her prizes and her crowns; so the two went upstairs to their flat, where, to their surprise, they heard madame talking volubly to some one within.

It was evidently some one who could not understand French very well, for madame, under the illusion that broken French would be easier understood, was shouting a most extraordinary jargon to the visitor.

Miss Taylor waited a moment in astonishment to listen; but Muriel, curiosity getting the better of her, went into the room, and her aunt heard her give a wild cry of joy.

'Papa! Oh papa! Oh papa!' was all she could say.

Dr Taylor was hardly less moved than his daughter, and for the first few minutes the three could scarcely speak. The rush of memories made the meeting almost as full of pain as of joy; but presently Dr Taylor, holding a hand of each, began to tell them all he had done, and to ask all that they had done, and there seemed no end to the questions to be asked on both sides.

'And now, papa, you have come home to stay with us?' said Muriel, putting her arms round her father's neck.

'Don't let us talk of what we are going to do; let us have some lunch,' interrupted Louise Taylor, who saw that her brother did not know what to reply, for he had no intention of remaining at home, as she knew.

So the three talked about what Muriel had been doing, and enjoyed a cold lunch; after which Muriel said suddenly, 'Papa, you don't know Mademoiselle Angelique!'

'And who is Mademoiselle Angelique, and why must I know her? Is she a cat?' inquired Dr Taylor.

Muriel laughed merrily. 'No, an artist, and such a clever one! She has won a scholarship for painting; but she does not paint as well as Aunt Lu for all that,' she maintained.

'That's right, Muriel, always be loyal to old friends. But why am I to see Mademoiselle Angelique particularly?' inquired her father.

'Because she is our great friend, and she nursed Aunt Lu when she was ill, and is very nice.'

'Then, of course, I must see her and thank her for that,' said the doctor.

And soon after lunch Louise Taylor fetched Angelique, who came in smiling and shaking her head. 'I hear you wish to thank me for taking care of your sister. I assure you, on the contrary, that she has taken care of me; but in truth I am

very glad that you have come back to take care of them yourself. It is sad for them to have had you so far away.'

'Ah yes, just so—just so,' said Dr Taylor. 'I have felt it sad also.'

The conversation dropped, but whenever Angelique met the doctor she asked him when he was going to settle the future of his sister; and one day she said boldly, 'I suppose you would not like to live in Paris, Monsieur le Docteur.'

Dr Taylor looked at her gravely. 'As a doctor? I never thought of that.'

'Well, think of it now,' she said, laughing. 'You must settle somewhere near a good school for Muriel; and, as you do not wish to return to London, why not try Paris?'

Dr Taylor did not reply, but the remarks had wakened him to a sense of his duty, and he did think of it, and made a good many inquiries, the result of which was that he eventually decided to settle there; and the next time that Muriel said something about staying at the flat he replied, 'You have not room for me here, have you? I should have thought you were *de trop* as it is,' said Dr Taylor, smiling.

'Oh, but we could take another flat large enough for you,' said Muriel promptly, while Miss Taylor shook her head.

'What! you do not approve of that plan?' inquired her brother.

'I only shook my head because it is impossible, unless you have come into a fortune, and mean to settle in Paris,' replied Miss Taylor.

'No, that I certainly have not,' said her brother; 'but one might do worse than settle in Paris for a time. However, that would not prevent your remaining in this flat'—— he was saying, when Miss Taylor interrupted him.

'Do you really mean that you will come and live in Paris? Why, of course, I will come and live with you.—Won't we, Muriel?—You don't know how tired we are of climbing seven flights of stairs, and how small we find this flat, and how very glad we shall be to have you with us; it will be too delightful! But do you really mean it?'

'Yes,' he replied, 'I really do mean it, though I do not quite know where yet. I think it is possible that I may settle here in the autumn; and if so, we must look out for a flat which will suit us all, and do for a doctor.'

Muriel gave a long-drawn sigh of relief. 'Then I shall have you both! I am so glad!' she said.

The next thing was to tell the Ballanfahs, who, needless to say, were delighted, and began at once to make useful suggestions.

'I find Muriel so improved after four months of her aunt and Paris that I feel I cannot do better than join them both here,' he said to Madame Ballanfah, as he thanked her for her goodness to his sister and daughter.

'And so you see, Marthe, you need not have cried at the thought of my leaving Paris, for here I am likely to remain all my life,' said Muriel to her friend.

Marthe sighed. 'I hope so; but one is never sure with English people. They don't seem able to stop still very long; they go off travelling after a little time.'

'Well, I do not want to travel if I have papa and Aunt Lu with me,' declared Muriel. And with this Marthe had to be content; and very content she was when she found that the Taylors were to be still nearer neighbours, and have a nice flat in the next street to them.

'My sister must remain in the Quartier Latin for her art-studies, and Muriel for her school; and for myself, I think no other part of Paris so interesting,' said Dr Taylor, 'and mean to study Old Paris and her great men with Muriel and Lu when my medical work will allow me,' said Dr Taylor when explaining his choice of that neighbourhood.

So, to the regret of Madame Laval, who said she had never loved any tenants so well, and was only consoled by the fact that they were near enough for her to see very often, the tiny flat was abandoned, and the autumn saw the three settled in their new flat, still in the Latin Quarter of Paris.

Angelique went back to the château, and stayed there all the summer; and then, as Louise Taylor had prophesied, her aunt consented not to let Angelique

leave her, but to go with the girl for her three years' travel in Italy.

'It does not seem to be such a sacrifice to her after all,' wrote Angelique. '*La tante* says that she has always wished to travel; that she is not too old yet to begin, and shall enjoy it as much as I; and that she is glad to leave the château now that *grand'mère* is no longer there.'

'Things settle themselves wonderfully,' said Aunt Lu with a sigh of relief, for things were settling themselves for her delightfully.

Angelique, it is true, had gained the great scholarship from the School of Art; but, as she had predicted, Louise Taylor had gained the scholarship offered by Monsieur Goupil, so she would now study under him and yet remain with her brother and Muriel.

And Muriel had a real home again.

THE END.

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